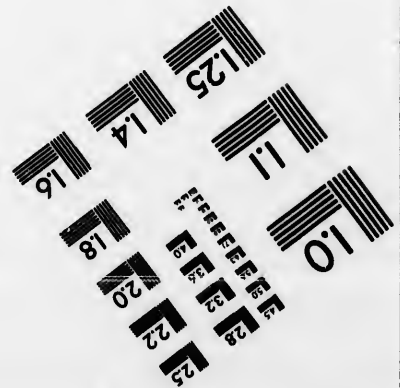
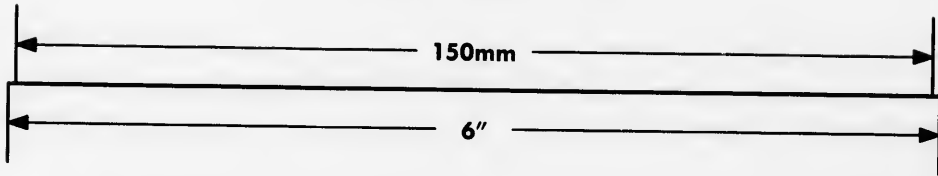
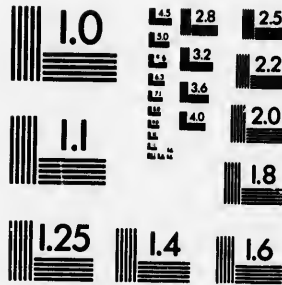
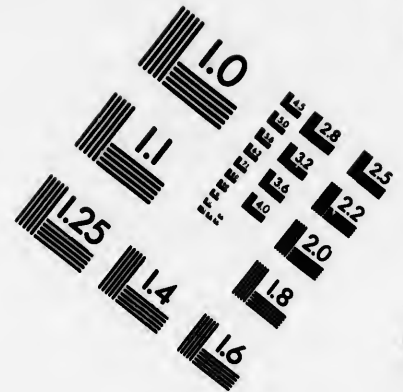
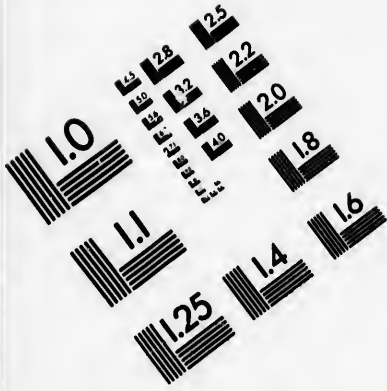


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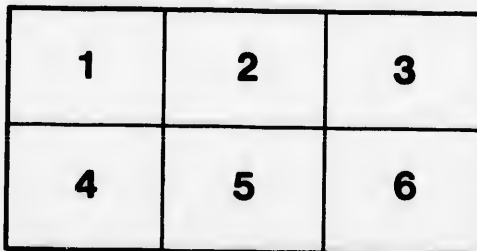
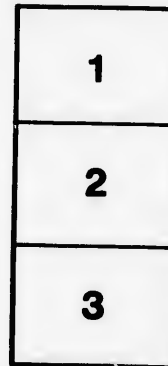
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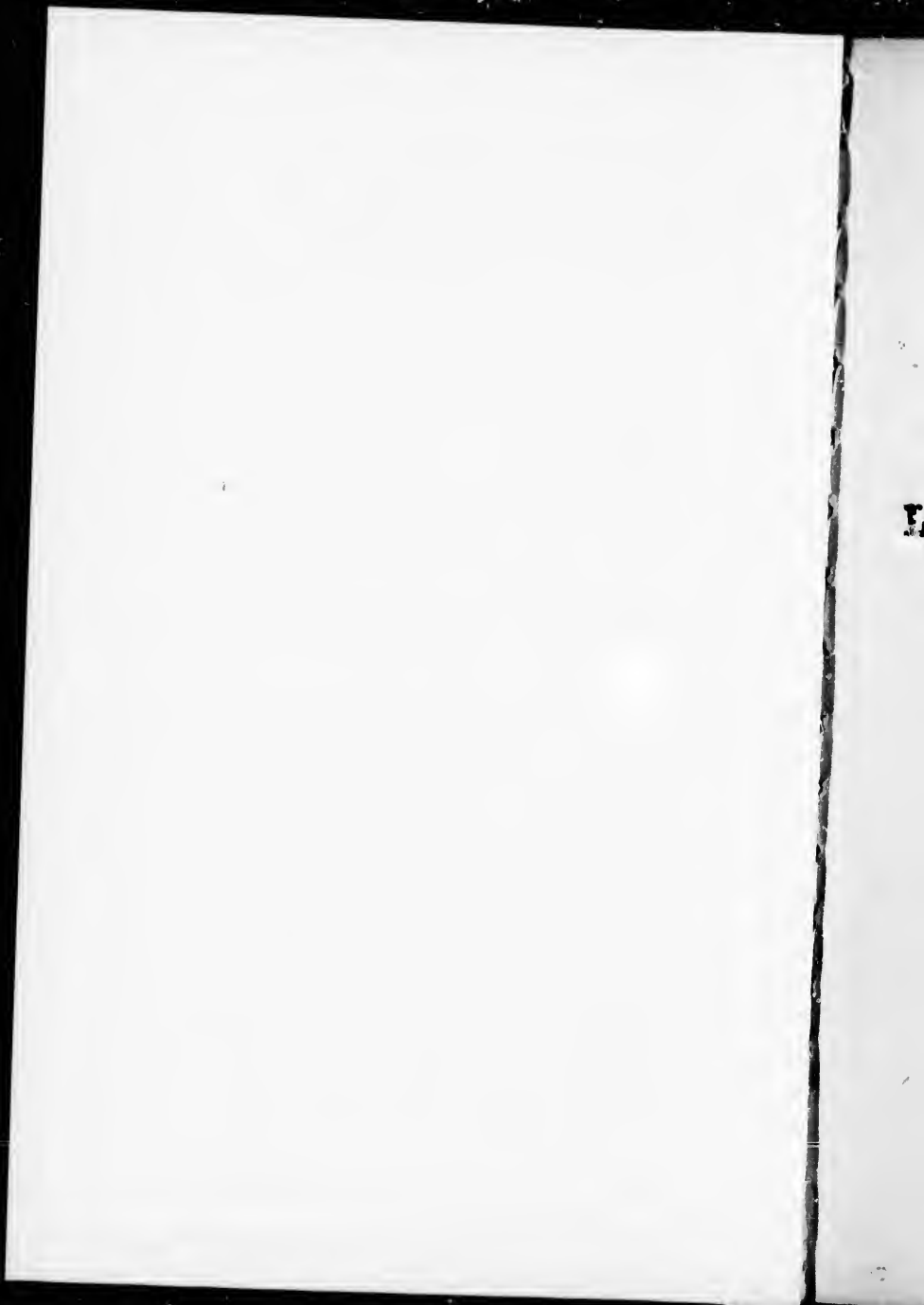
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HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

OF THE

LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

M. LEON AUBINEAU.

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NEW YORK:

D. & J. SADLER & CO., 31 BARCLAY ST.

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HISTORICAL NOTICE  
OF THE  
LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR.

[WRITTEN IN 1851.]

THE history of the origin of the various institutes devoted to prayer and charity, of which the Church has witnessed the foundation, is alike instructive and interesting. The hand of God most clearly manifests itself therein; and its operation can be traced out as it accomplishes its object in antagonism to human wisdom, and in the midst of outward lowliness and humility; choosing, as the surest foundation of its most extraordinary works, poverty and self-abasement.

Human pride is rebellious to the teachings of the past; facts, gathered from our own times, may be more attractive and impressive. It is in this hope we are induced to lay before our readers, in the present sketch, some facts connected with the history of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

The object of their work is known; any attempt to awaken sympathy and interest towards labors everywhere regarded with admiration, and of which the results are already patent and tangible in America and Europe, would be indeed superfluous. But there is so much of instruction and consolation in this narrative; the weakness of the instruments of whom God has been pleased to make use, in coming so bountifully to the assistance of His poor, offers so striking a lesson, and one so opposite to modern theories, that

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it is well to make our readers acquainted with some facts concerning the rise and gradual development of this good work. In nothing can be more plainly shown the power of charity,—of that true charity which prompts us to devote ourselves, first, to God, and, then, to our neighbor for the love of God.

The work of the Little Sisters of the Poor began, like all the operations of God, upon a small foundation; it developed, and still supports itself independently of all resources, save those vouchsafed by Providence. In all the oppositions and extremities to which it has been subjected, the Institute has simply had recourse to prayer. With this support, it has been enabled to give ample scope to that charitable zeal which it calls into exercise amongst its members. In this there is something like what is called, in scholastic phraseology, a *petitio principii*. Charity and prayer mutually assist and, so to say, depend upon each other in never-ending extension. Charity conceives the thought, prayer obtains its realization: charity thereby becomes more enterprising in its projects; prayer, ever growing more and more fervent, beholds incessantly the means of action developed and multiplied. When this pious undertaking was begun, its founders never contemplated establishing an institute which would spread all over Europe, and thence throughout the world itself, as we may already say. They were dealing solely with a single and actual case of want. God alone has given to the undertaking its fruitfulness and its extension. Human creatures have but contributed their patience, their devotedness, and their submission to Divine inspiration.

It was at St. Servan that the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor began. St. Servan is a little town of Brittany, opposite to St. Malo, on the coast of the Atlantic, by an arm of which, twice every day left dry, the two cities are divided. The people on these coasts earn their livelihood and spend their energies upon the sea; and to the terrible ravages of this element

are ascribed the number of aged and destitute widows to be met with in Brittany. Having no other means of subsistence than that of beggary, they are apt to fall into those vices with which it is too often accompanied. Many amongst them remind one of those poor creatures, of whom the good Anne Jacqueline Coste formerly thus spoke to St. Francis of Sales:—

“They receive alms, unconscious that it is God who gives it; they live in the most deplorable condition of vagabonds, haunting the church doors without ever crossing their thresholds, and in utter ignorance of the Mysteries that are celebrated with in; added to all manner of vice, they live and die in a profound ignorance of all that concerns their eternal salvation.”

The concern for these poor souls which impelled the good *tourière* of the first monastery of the Visitation at Annecy to speak boldly to the blessed Bishop of Geneva, and to point out to him the best course to take in aid of this numerous class among his flock,—this same concern pressed heavily, some dozen years ago, upon an assistant priest of the parish of St. Servan. We are not at liberty to enter into details concerning the life of this priest. \*Be it enough to say that it was a life devoted to God, and the holy exercise of charity—a devout life, full of zeal that no obstacles could quench. The destitution of the souls for whom he suffered, was complete. At St. Servan there was no refuge for the poor; none of these public asylums where old men and women may find shelter from actual starvation, and are supposed to receive those spiritual consolations of which they stand in need.

The poor priest had not himself the resources indispensable to the foundation of any such asylum; but he possessed the power of inspiring in some chosen souls the compassion wherewith he was moved. Providence took care to show him those to whom he was to have recourse. A young girl of the parish, who was not in the habit of attending his

confessionals, came there one day, though she was never able to explain how or why she had sought him out. The priest recognized at once a fit agent for the work he had at heart. As for her, on receiving the instructions of the priest to whom she had been led, so to say, in spite of herself, she experienced that peace and consolation given by God to souls obedient to the guidance which He chooses for them. She belonged to the working class, was entirely dependent upon her daily labor, and for a long time had wished to become a nun. The priest encouraged this intention, and began to have some hope of one day realizing his favorite project for relieving the aged poor. He soon took notice of another young girl amongst his penitents, an orphan, and in humble circumstances, like the former. He persuaded these two to form an acquaintance, and, without further explaining himself, assured them God desired both of them to be entirely His, and that they should serve Him in the religious state. For this honor he exhorted them to prepare themselves, and to strive to overcome all natural inclinations of their hearts. The two children, for so they may well be called (one being but eighteen, and the other barely sixteen years of age), obeyed, and set themselves generously to the work. The priest had told them they should serve God in the same community, and they believed him without further investigation. He desired the younger to look upon the elder as her superior and her mother. Each worked at her own employment during the week, and on Sundays they met each other. Up to the time of the priest's recommendation to become acquainted, they had known nothing of each other; but from that day forward they felt united by one of those sweet and powerful ties with which Providence binds together the souls He counts His own, and whose sweetness and strength all the frivolous friendships of the world cannot realize.

Every Sunday, after Mass at the parish church, these two girls, shunning companions and amuse-

ments, withdrew to the sea-shore. They had chosen a certain hollow in a rock ; and within its shelter they passed their afternoons together, talking of God, and manifesting one to the other their interior progress, and any transgressions they might have committed against a simple rule of life the priest had laid down for them. As a matter of course, they thus accustomed themselves, in all simplicity, to this practice of the religious life, which is called spiritual conference. They talked over their rule, and set themselves to enter into the spirit of it. The meaning of one sentence perplexed them. " We will delight above all things," it said, " in showing tenderness towards those aged poor who are infirm and sick; we will never refuse to assist them, provided an occasion presents itself; and we must take the greatest care not to meddle with what does not concern us." They pondered over these words, without at all divining the plans of him whom they had already learned to call their father. He treated them as did St. Francis of Sales the holy Jane de Chantal, speaking to them about their vocation, proposing certain communities, then giving them some different advice, inducing them to take some step in which he knew they would be harshly rebuked ; in fact, he tried their patience and tested their vocation in every possible manner for nearly two years. During the few last months of this time of probation, he, in some degree, made his design known to them, recommending to their special care an old blind woman of the neighborhood. The girls obeyed him, and devoted all their leisure moments to this poor creature ; they comforted her to the best of their poor power ; spent her little savings for her, kept her room in order, and led her every Sunday to Mass ; in fact, they did all that charity could prompt for her relief and consolation. Meanwhile, Providence so disposed events as to bring about the beginning of that good work which had been as yet so dimly shadowed out before them. They became acquainted with an old servant, whose name is now

well known throughout France. Jeanne Jugan eagerly entered into the proposed plan. She was forty-eight years of age, was worth a little sum, amounting to about six hundred francs, and provided by labor for her daily wants. Out of economy she kept house with another pious woman much older than herself. Fanchon Aubert seems to have been chosen by God as the primary benefactress of this Institute. In accordance with the entire lowliness of its origin, this benefactress was by no means wealthy. Fanchon was at least sixty years old; she possessed a little property, a small stock of furniture suited to the very plainest dwelling, and a quantity of linen. She gave up all; nay, she gave herself to this good work. She shared the toils and the privations of the Sisters; she lived amongst them, never left them, and died in their embrace. A proposal was afterwards made that she should take the vows with her companions; but she felt herself too old for this, and remained with them on the same terms as at the beginning.

Into the little attic, which she shared with Jeanne, she joyfully welcomed Marie Thérèse, the orphan, who was compelled by circumstances to seek a new shelter. Marie Augustine, the girl first mentioned in these pages, came also, whenever she was at leisure, to spend an hour with her young friend. The proposed plan was not at first communicated to Fanchon; there was no desire to publish their intention of founding a new institute; indeed, the three Sisters themselves were as yet scarcely aware of it. Their spiritual father had directed them to abandon themselves entirely to Divine Providence, to trust to God for everything, and to be simply anxious that they might love Him, serve Him with their whole souls, and be devoted to the salvation and consolation of their neighbors, especially the aged poor. The Sisters did this gladly, and besought God to bless their undertaking, and to look down with mercy on their trial of community life. Moreover, Marie

Thérèse, on taking up her abode in the attic, did not come alone. She brought with her our Lord Himself, visibly present in the person of His poor Fanchon, who was remarkably reserved and discreet, and, without inquiring into her friends' plans, yet shared their generous devotion to the utmost. Fanchon, a good little old woman, invariably neat and methodical, and hitherto rather on her guard against any invasion on her old habits, readily consented to receive under her roof the poor old blind woman of eighty years, to whom they had devoted themselves now for many months.

On the Feast of St. Theresa, in the year 1840, Marie Augustine and Marie Thérèse brought home in their arms this cherished invalid; and the blessing of God came with her to the newly-formed household. The first step being thus taken, room was found to take in another poor old woman. Thus was the house established. Nothing was apparently changed in the way of life of its inhabitants, and Fanchon still remained its head. Jeanne employed herself in spinning; Marie Augustine and Marie Thérèse worked at their sewing or washing, occasionally interrupting their labors to look after their two invalids, to whom they devoted themselves with all the tenderness of pious daughters towards their mothers; solacing their sufferings, enlightening their faith, animating, strengthening, and inflaming their piety. The priest, whom we may now call their founder and father, helped the little community to the utmost of his power; and by God's grace there was enough for all. It was not, however, enough for them that they could maintain themselves; their aim was to extend their sphere of usefulness. A fourth servant of the poor was now added to the three first. Being ill, and at the point of death, she wished to die consecrated to God, in accordance with the pious practice of other days, and embraced the Institute of the Little Sisters. She was herself carried to their attic, where she recovered. Giving up to God the life which,

after she had offered it, He had restored, she devoted herself to the service of the sick and aged. But the relief of two poor old women was not to be the only fruit the Church should gather for God's glory from the noble devotion of these pious Sisters.

They continued to inhabit the attic for about ten months. It was their time of probation, their novitiate, so to say. Perhaps they had meanwhile hoped that such devotion would soon awaken some generous interest in others, and collect a fund which would enable them to extend their work, and open an asylum for a larger number of old people. Perhaps, again, they had not looked beyond the humble beginning we have described. However, if they had looked for any human aid, they now determined on dispensing with it; and if, hitherto, they had been contented with the lovely and consoling results of their efforts in the attic, they now felt satisfied no longer with so little. Whoever gives himself to God must do so entirely, without reserve; there is a sweetness of delight in such a sacrifice, which souls who once have tasted it can no more give up; they will eagerly press on in such a path, doing themselves all that in them lies, and admitting others to take part with them, if they will, in any work which God has once appointed for them.

It was therefore determined in the consultations which took place in the lowly attic, that the undertaking should extend itself, and a greater number of old people should enjoy the benefits it proposed. When we speak of consultations, let us not be misunderstood. Little enough of discussion took place in the attic. Their spiritual father counselled his daughters to pray, he prayed himself; and when the will of God appeared clear to him, he made it known to them, leaving their obedience free: obedience, that virtue of inestimable worth, of incalculable potency, shining forth in all the great works undertaken by the Church, giving them at once their brightness and their strength, and leading them forward to victory.

Fanchon, the only member of the little community who had any credit in the town, as the possessor of a little property, made up her mind to renounce the humble dwelling, which had become dear to her as a home, and to rent an uncomfortable basement-floor, a low, damp room, which had long been used as a wine shop. This was large enough to hold twelve beds: the beds were quickly there, and still more quickly occupied. The four servants of the poor, notwithstanding all the aid of their good old friend, Fanchon, had enough to do to attend upon their pensioners. It was no longer possible to support themselves and the old people by their daily labor; it was as much as they could do to give to their beloved poor all those attentions required by their age and infirmities. The Sisters dressed their wounds, kept the place clean, assisted the old women in getting up and going to bed, instructed and comforted them; it was impossible to provide besides for other wants. The Civil Bureau of Benevolence continued to the old women, thus assembled by charity beneath one roof, the same assistance given formerly when living apart: bestowing bread and lending linen. To meet their further necessities, which were not few, those old women who could walk kept up their old accustomed trade, and went out begging every day. The Sisters prepared the meals, and shared themselves this bread of charity; and in this way, aided by relief which came unexpectedly, and often in the most extraordinary manner, they still contrived to live from day to day.

To eat this bread of beggary was not, however, sufficient; God exacted a fresh sacrifice, a deeper humiliation. The mendicant trade of the old women had this fault, that it brought them constantly into danger of relapsing into their bad habits of former days—drunkenness, for example, which was the predominant failing of most of these unfortunate creatures. The Sisters, jealous guardians above all things of the spiritual welfare of their poor, yearned to shield



them from this temptation, and to spare them also the degradation of a beggar's life, although most of them, having grown old in this vocation, felt no longer any shame in it. The good father then proposed to his children to be no longer merely the servants of the poor, but to become beggars also, out of love for them, and for the greater glory of God. This sacrifice was no sooner suggested to them, than it was cordially undertaken. Without scruple, without hesitation, they became beggars.

Jeanne, the foremost in this work of love, seized a basket, and instantly set out. Her heart burning with love for God and for her neighbor, she fearlessly applied for help at every house at which their poor were wont to find relief. She accepted, with humility and gratitude, the scraps of broken food or copper coins that were willingly tendered her.

Thus Providence provided for the Little Sisters an inexhaustible resource. From that day till now they have collected a maintenance for their poor by this noble and sanctified alms-seeking. All Jeanne's companions followed her example, though she alone continued to bear the name of "begging Sister" for the Institute. Not content with making her quest amongst those towns where the Little Sisters have already found a refuge for their poor, she travels everywhere; and you, perhaps, dear reader, may one day behold her at your door, describing, in a straightforward and most touching way, the object of her visit, the necessities of her beloved charge, and the mercies of the Lord towards them. Nothing casts her down, or disturbs her serenity; she sees the hand of God in all things. Grateful for what it bestows, she hopes against hope for what it withholds, and does not even doubt of the generosity or goodness of those who cannot share her pious undertaking. This wonderful self-devotion not only draws down blessings from on high, but conquers human prejudices. Those who are the most inveterate against mendacity are yet struck with admiration for this noble and courageous mendicant; and

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it is well known that the French Academy has awarded her the prize of virtue. From the very beginning this generous devotion surprised and touched all who were witness of it; and the quest made by the Sisters was far more abundant in its results than that of the old women. Every one added some trifle to the alms or broken victuals usually bestowed. Clothes, furniture, provisions of various kinds were placed at the disposal of the Sisters, and thus their poor were better off. But linen was a never-failing want: what had been lent to them was already insufficient, and their distress was becoming urgent, when the Benevolent Bureau who lent it, pressed by other claims, was under the necessity of withdrawing from the Little Sisters that linen which it had hitherto supplied to many of their poor. In this extremity the Little Sisters had recourse to their wonted dependence—they applied themselves to prayer, and especially sought aid of Mary, beseeching her to come to their assistance. On the Feast of the Assumption they erected a little altar to the Blessed Virgin. A *gendarme*, living near the Asylum, which people already began to call the "Good Women's Home," touched by what he saw daily passing in this happy dwelling, took it on himself to raise and decorate this little altar.

The Sisters spread before it the scanty stock of linen belonging to their poor *protégées*; five or six well-worn chemises comprised its utmost wealth; there were no sheets. Such destitution touched the Blessed Virgin: alas! who would not have been moved by it? For many days the altar had numerous visitors. Our Lady touched their hearts with pity, and all were anxious to relieve such dire distress. Even poor servants, who had no money to give, took off their rings, and put them round the neck of the infant Jesus in His Mother's arms, a tiny image of whom, scarcely four inches high, surmounted the altar. By these means, and by such generosity, the poor women found themselves sufficiently provided with chemises, sheets, and other linen of which they had most need.

In this way matters went on, but still no other vocation was obtained by the sight of the heroic devotion of these first Sisters. It was now more than three years since the founder had spoken of his plans to Marie Augustine and Marie Thérèse, had given them a rule of life, and placed them under the patronage of Mary Immaculate, St. Joseph, and St. Augustine. It was more than eighteen months since the work of comforting the poor had been begun, and yet no one else had come forward to join the poor foundresses. Though heartfelt sympathy had been awakened, and alms flowed in abundantly, the devil failed not to make use of every obstacle to hinder this good work. The isolation in which the Sisters lived, was one of the worst results of his artifices. Doubtless God permitted him this liberty, in order to test the constancy of His servants, and confirm their work. Moreover, it mostly happens that the works of God are exposed to contradiction. Those which the Little Sisters underwent, were of various kinds. The parish priest of St. Servan had approved their charitable efforts; nevertheless, there was no lack of talking over their doings. The undertaking was so novel, so unusual, so much at variance with human prudence. Not only were poor people taken in, and fed and sheltered by extraordinary devices, but what an inconceivable idea it was that uneducated workmen, totally untrained, should be attempting to form themselves into a community! Who was to form them to religious life and discipline? Who was asked all over St. Servan. Who would teach them to love and practise a spiritual rule of life? Before banding themselves together, might it not have been expedient for them to be trained in some well-known, old-established convent? At any rate, there was no doubt it was their duty, in setting to work, to have put themselves under the guidance of a mistress of novices, well accustomed to the religious life, skilful in forming and distinguishing vocations, in bending, exercising, and subjugating the human will. All this was reasonable and perfectly just; but the Spirit

of God breatheth where it willeth, and the founder of this Institute felt profoundly that he was undertaking an entirely new work, and that, for a new work, new instruments were necessary. However excellent the religious orders may be, their usefulness is limited by the special work to which they were destined, and with regard to which they were in fact created. It is unreasonable to demand of them sacrifices, or propose labors which were never contemplated by their founders. Nay, the actual ruin of some congregations may be traced to the influence of those temptations which seduced them from the observance of their rule, and from their original destination. The founder and the foundresses of the work we are describing, did not, perhaps, go so deeply into the merits of this question; they simply followed the inspiration of God, and nothing seemed more natural to them than to act as they did.

However, with such arguments as reason and prudence could suggest, the devil, as we have said, failed not to mingle his powerful wiles.

At the same time that so much sympathy as was needful to the very existence of these poor was awakened in their behalf, a spirit of ridicule and opprobrium was excited against the Sisters, and they had to drain to the very dregs all the shame of their begging. They were pointed at, ridiculed, and made game of, in the public streets of St. Servan; even their former companions at catechism, school, or work, nay, the very playmates of their infancy, were afraid to go near them. Those who were attracted by their example, and who, full of admiration for such devotedness, felt disposed to imitate it, were instinctively held back by all the annoying publicity and reproach which was attached to the undertaking. One only of the four foundresses, Marie Augustine, had any relatives. These spared her neither reproach nor reprimand. Her younger sister, now Superior of their house at Rennes, would say when she met her out with her basket, in quest of food, "Get along with you! Don't

“speak to me. I'm ashamed of you and of your basket.” Sister Marie Louise, now Superior of one of their houses in Paris, was so deeply impressed by the zeal of the Little Sisters, that she longed to become one of them, and share their labors; but when she witnessed the abject state in which they lived, she felt disgusted, and lifting up her heart to God, exclaimed, “No, my God, no; this is impossible. Thou canst not require this of me.” Sister Félicité, who died Superior at Angers, and died such a death as we may imagine becoming to a Little Sister of the Poor,—Sister Félicité, we say, consumed with a desire to devote herself to God, used to invoke St. Joseph, before whose altar she was accustomed to place herself in church, that he would obtain for her the grace of becoming a religious; but, she added, with simplicity, not amongst the Little Sisters.

The first who, after four years' experience of this hard trial of abandonment, broke the sort of spell which held them in disrepute, was one who little thought, on entering their house, of remaining within it. She simply came, in a moment of emergency, to help the Sisters. But when she had tasted the grace of these dear children,—that grace which is the gift of God to those who love Him and devote themselves to His service, she yielded herself up to the winning force of its attraction, and begged to be received into their holy company. Nor was she the only one who came amongst them in this manner. Another, paying a visit to some of her companions newly admitted amongst the Little Sisters, found them so cheerful and happy, that she also desired to become partaker of their happiness, and remain amongst them. To one of these houses, founded at a later period, two needlewomen came one day, and offered to undertake the mending of the linen; a begging Sister having been in their village, and given them some account of the efforts of the Little Sisters. Being just then without work, they thought of spending their time usefully in mending the old clothes of the Sisters and their aged

poor. They came five leagues in the hope of undertaking this charitable action: they performed it joyfully; and on leaving, at the end of a few days, they shed tears in parting from the Sisters, and promised soon to come again. They did, in fact, return; but not now to offer to their God a spare fragment of their time: they came to consecrate to His service, and to the comfort of His poor, the whole of their future life, with all its energies and powers. In the accomplishment of one single act of charity, they had found the grace of their vocation; their generosity had even here below thus met with its reward,—a precious reward; and one far greater and more pure than even their devotedness; for surely it is no small honor to belong entirely to God. The Little Sisters know this well—they shrink abashed under the greatness of this dignity; and thus the virtue of humility, sure token of a blessing from on high, is nourished and kept up amongst them.

As it is the tendency of all the Christian virtues to sustain and develop each other, so this humility and confidence in God enabled the Little Sisters to support with patience every difficulty. They gave themselves no trouble about the disrepute in which the world held them, they did not care for its encouragements; and they only found in its rebuffs a reason for giving themselves up more completely to the Providence of God. Although the number of the Sisters was still so limited, they continued to increase the number of their poor, and without scruple and hesitation, when their basement-floor was full, they bought, in 1842, a large house, formerly occupied by a religious community. It is true they had no means to pay for it. The Reverend Le Pailleur sold his gold watch and the silver furniture of his altar, besides other things. Jeanne had a little ready money, one of her companions had contrived to save a little, and Fanchon readily contributed all that remained of her small property. All these contributions put together were barely sufficient to defray the necessary expenses of

the contract; but they trusted in Providence to supply them the rest. Nor was their confidence misplaced: at the end of a year the house, which had cost twenty-two thousand francs, was all paid for. We are not able to detail all the means by which this end was obtained; the Providence of God seemed to be interested in its accomplishment, the more so as it was so much confided in, and, so to say, even tempted by the courageous way in which every obstacle was disregarded in carrying on a work which appeared to lookers-on not only incomprehensible, but hopeless. The Sisters, who about this time adopted the sweet and humble title of the Little Sisters of the Poor, took their vows, so to say, blindfolded, and with hands tied. Their pious founder defined, in a developed form, the rule of life which was henceforth to bind them. Besides the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, they took upon them also, at his bidding, an admirable vow of hospitality; thus giving to this virtue, which they had practised for so long and in so marvellous a manner, that infinite value which is accorded by the goodness of God to every act performed in His service, under a special engagement entered into with Him.

The vow of hospitality was rigorously observed at St. Servan. At the end of eighteen months the large dwelling was already full; fifty aged persons had been received there, and the four Sisters did the work of many, in attendance on these infirm creatures. And here again appears another miracle of that Providence, which comforts even whilst it sends trials. To feed this large family, there was no resource but in begging, and this was found sufficient. The good God can make all easy, when everything is confided to His care. Broken victuals, crusts of bread, and scraps of meat fell abundantly into the Sisters' hands. Yet this tender and beneficent Providence failed not to let them feel from time to time more stringently their state of happy dependence on its care. As a nursing mother takes pleasure in withdrawing her infant one instant from her breast,

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that it may receive it the more eagerly when pressed again to the maternal bosom, so did Divine Providence sometimes suffer them to wait for its bounties. In accordance with their constitution, and the vow of hospitality which binds them, the Little Sisters provide, before all things, for the necessities of their aged poor. They divide all they have amongst their guests, and feed themselves upon the fragments that are left after meals. Although the poor pensioners had sufficient, and even abundant, fare, the Sisters had sometimes scarce enough to eat. Once particularly, on a winter's night, when the old people were already gone to rest, there was nothing left in the house for the Sisters' supper but one quarter of a pound of bread. Nevertheless, they sat down cheerfully to table, said their *Benedicite*, and thanked God heartily for even this morsel of bread, which not one amongst them would have thought of considering well earned. They passed it merrily from one to the other, each one disclaiming any rights to it, and all pretending to be well able to do without it. All were contented, and each one happy to be able to make some little sacrifice for God. He did not despise it, but was satisfied with their good-will. Whilst this amiable contest was cheerfully passing at the Sisters' table, some one rang the bell, notwithstanding the late hour; and, behold! Divine Providence had sent them from the priest's house a bountiful supply of bread and meat! A thousand examples might be cited of this unfailing Providence of God in cases of extremity. The history of the foundation of different religious orders abounds in such examples; and we may well believe that, in the case of the Little Sisters of the Poor, so generously devoted, and so reliant on Divine Providence, they would not be found wanting.

Thus trusting, and with their confidence continually justified by the generosity of this watchful Providence, the Sisters went on, trying to extend their labors in behalf of the poor. The more they devoted



themselves to this pious undertaking, the better they understood the importance of the work which God had intrusted to them. They found that the souls of the unfortunate creatures whom they had collected together, were conquered by the sweet influence of their benefactions. The charity which had been shown towards them drew them towards their God. These poor souls, hitherto steeped in vice and ignorance, revived once more to life and hope. They learned to know, to love, and to bless God, who had sent them in their misery such devoted and compassionate Sisters. Many charming instances of virtue, courage, resignation, and piety, might be mentioned on the part of these poor creatures, who, before they entered the asylum, were generally degraded by every kind of vice and misery. In the face of the results which crowned their efforts, and considering the many souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus, but in such grievous peril of being lost, a peril that their reception in the asylum might avert, who can wonder that the zeal of the Little Sisters was forever on the increase, and that they sought for nothing better than to extend their labors and enlarge their house? But, alas! as we have already said, the house was full, quite full; the Sisters, in order to afford more shelter to the poor, had already taken up their abode in the garret. There was no more room; yet there were still poor people in want of shelter in the town and its neighborhood. What was to be done? The Sisters had a piece of ground, and ten cents in the treasury. They thought they should build. Putting the little solitary coin under the feet of the statue of the Blessed Virgin, they began boldly. They were already familiar with many a wonder of Divine Providence wrought in their behalf; and, without hesitation, they set their feeble hands, hitherto accustomed to laundry-work or sewing, to the labor of beginning the building; knowing well that it is the Lord, and not His laborers, who gives the strength sufficient for His works. They cleared the ground, they dug

the foundation, and tried to collect materials for building. Yet, once more, God required nothing further, and responded to this intrepid boldness which nothing could dismay. The workmen of St. Servan, moved at the sight of so much devotion on the part of the Sisters, came forward, offering their help in labors so holy. The carrying of materials was also done gratuitously, and alms abundantly flowed in.

An inhabitant of Jersey, who had a relation living at St. Servan, having heard that she was in want, came to ascertain her condition, in order that he might assist her. He found her sheltered in the asylum, so well cared for and so happy, that he went away full of gratitude. From that time he sent all his alms to Father Le Pailleur, and at his death bequeathed a legacy of seven thousand francs, which fell in most opportunely to carry on the building. The prize for virtue, which was accorded by the Academy to Jeanne Jugan (three thousand francs), arrived also fortunately just in time for the same purpose.

Before the completion of the building, the number of Sisters began to increase. The constancy of the founders was at last recompensed by God. They were audacious enough even to think about establishing more houses, although it was really almost a miracle that the four Sisters could fulfil all the duties of the house at St. Servan; but they were determined that this little town should not be the only one to profit by their enterprise. They considered not their own weakness; they thought only of the good that might be accomplished. So soon as their numbers had increased, Marie Augustine set out for Rennes. No resources were provided for her; she was to trust a second time to the wonders which had already been worked in her behalf. Her first act was, not to raise funds, but to seek out destitute poor. She took up a temporary abode in a wretched suburb, full of wine shops and drinking rooms. There, as in other places,

she found ready sympathy, and some degree of assistance. One characteristic of the good work of the Little Sisters is, that they are ready to receive any kind of alms; the humblest are as valuable, and often more consoling than the wealthiest: however, Marie Augustine had doubtless some confidence that the latter would not be wanting, for she scrupled not to buy a house at Rennes. When the little household left the quarters in which they had made a temporary home, the soldiers who frequented the wine shops we have mentioned, lent their aid to carry the old women who had been already taken in. The good Mother Marie Augustine, whom we may now call the Mother Superior, left at Rennes four Little Sisters, whom she had summoned from St. Servan to carry on this new foundation; and she took back with her two postulants from Rennes. She found that the number in the house at St. Servan had increased during her absence. The meaning of this was perfectly clear; there was, in fact, a perfect understanding between the Little Sisters and Divine Providence. Consequently, they were quite ready to enter into a proposition made to them from Dinan.

This is a small town in the diocese of St. Brieuc. The mayor thought he would perform a good service by bestowing on his city an asylum for the aged poor, that would not tax the funds of the town. It must be remembered that we are speaking here of a town in Brittany,—a country where progress and light make their way with difficulty. Sanctioned by the two priests of the town, and with the approbation of the Right Reverend Bishop of St. Brieuc, the Little Sisters made their way to Dinan. Here, as at Rennes, the earliest care was for the solace of the aged poor, and they collected them temporarily in a place which had formerly been a prison; it was damp and unhealthy, for the sewers of the city running underneath gave out a poisonous effluvia, which had already been found dangerous and intolerable to the prisoners. The Sisters, however, were not dismayed;

the most wholesome room was devoted to the poor old people, and they took the rest for themselves. It is their usual custom to give the best part always to their guests. Charity and their vow of hospitality require this. There was another peculiarity in this old prison: the doors all shut from without, and it was impossible to fasten them inside. Thus, for many months, the Little Sisters slept under the safeguard of the good faith of the public. It is true there was nothing amidst all their furniture which could have roused cupidity. One may imagine the nature of these goods, entirely the gift of charity. It was not till several months had passed away that they found a suitable house to receive their poor pensioners; and necessary resources for their support were not long in developing themselves.

It is evident how much effort was necessary to establish and to carry out their undertaking. Now, however, the work was about to be rapidly and wonderfully extended, although at present there appeared no foreshadowing of the event. The Sisters had been content to live on from day to day, responding to the graces of Divine Providence, and even, according to the precepts of the Scripture, doing it a degree of violence; and by the close of the year 1846, they had founded three distinct houses, which maintained themselves and employed fifteen or sixteen Sisters. They were even meditating a fourth foundation, but resolved this time to go quite out of the narrow circle which had hitherto bounded their exertions, and to establish themselves almost eighty leagues from St. Servan.

Towns upon the sea-coast are sure to be visited every year by a certain number of strangers, in quest either of health by bathing, or of various expensive amusements. Of these latter, there are few enough at St. Servan; but there are curious visitors there, who like to know all the peculiarities about the site of their summer sojourn, and such amongst them as would be deeply interested in the work of the Little Sisters. In this number was one in particular, in the year 1846,

who was privately devoted to all kinds of good works, and ready to embrace them under any form whatever. The humility and piety of the Little Sisters, the wonderful effects which had been wrought by them amongst their poor, the cheerfulness and piety of these latter, and their thankfulness to God for the great mercy He had shown them in these their last days:—all this touched with a profound emotion the devout soul of whom we have spoken. While contemplating the good which had been already done, this good lady was deeply penetrated with the thought of all that yet remained to be done: so many poor to be relieved, so many hearts to be converted, so many souls to be raised to God! If the Little Sisters could not immediately be spread abroad everywhere, yet was it not at least the duty of every Christian to try and draw them to the spot in which he might happen to reside, that the poor might profit by their devotedness, and the whole town by their prayers? But what can a poor young lady do with but a little amount of credit, and few resources but her good-will? Everything, provided only she is armed with indomitable constancy, and has an entire confidence that God, and He alone, can do all things; and provided she is willing to render up to Him the glory of all that is accomplished. In spite of the distance, the Sisters did not reject the overtures which were made to them to come to the city of Tours; they at once agreed to go, asking nothing more than they had done before at Rennes and Dinan, namely: a roof to shelter them on their arrival, and liberty to set to work.

A good Christian was soon found, who considered it an honor to afford hospitality for a few days to these great servants of the poor. We cannot tell how the expenses of their journey were defrayed; but after their arrival in Tours, in the early part of January, 1847, they had only a few cents left on hand. They first hired a small house, where they could receive about a dozen poor people; afterwards a larger one; and finally, in February, 1848, they bought, for

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eighty thousand francs, a large building capable of containing from a hundred to a hundred and fifty persons, and having a garden and a chapel attached. And how all this was paid for, and how all this large family was provided for from day to day, is an abiding miracle. The broken victuals every day collected, and the various sums given in alms, were sufficient for everything. It is true that those scraps, which most people would reject with disdain, assume, in the hands of the Little Sisters, by no means a despicable aspect, and become a reliable resource. At present, in all their houses (the number of which we shall reckon by and by), coffee-grounds are made to yield a refreshing drink, which is a great comfort to these poor old people. No coffee-house will refuse to give these coffee-grounds, wherein, as if by special Providence, is sure to linger, in behalf of the Little Sisters' guests, some strength and aroma. When a little milk is added to the drink made from these coffee-grounds, and the crusts of bread, gathered from all quarters and ranks of dwellings, schools, colleges, and barracks, are laid upon the table, behold, a breakfast is provided! One, two, and even three hundred poor old people are thus supplied, in one single town, with an abundant meal out of these poor resources.

The foundation at Tours has cost more trouble and labor than almost any other of their houses. Owing to the very small number of Sisters the whole Institute could muster, and the great distance of Tours from any one of the already existing houses, the three Sisters who took up their abode there in January, 1847, remained quite alone for nearly five months; and yet during that time they took in from sixteen to eighteen poor old women.

For the daily wants of these the three Sisters had to provide; to assist the infirm in rising and dressing, to teach and enlighten the poor dark souls, and to maintain a constant atmosphere of cheerfulness among them (for this is one of the first duties of the Sisters); consequently, they exerted their energies far

beyond the usual limits of human strength. Of the three Sisters who came to form this house at Tours, Sister Félicité died two years later, from the fatigues she had gone through; and Mother Marie Louise, Mother Superior of the Faubourg St. Jacques, so well known in Paris, and hereafter to be as well known and well beloved in Lyons and Marseilles, has never recovered from the exertions of that period, but suffers from ruined health, which nothing can restore, although she still persists in active service of God and His poor. Nevertheless, these superhuman efforts were not allowed to trouble the glad serenity of the three laborers. Early every morning they set forth on their quest for broken victuals, carrying on each arm a large tin pail or can, which, being divided into separate compartments, allowed the scraps of meat, cups of broth, vegetables, and other fragments they received, to be separately stowed away. When at home, they set to work with all the activity that it may be well believed so large and infirm a family required at their hands. Victims of all imaginable misery might be found amongst these poor old women. But, in the midst of this heartrending wretchedness, of these repulsive infirmities, and the distasteful circumstances incidental to diseased old age, shone ever the brightening light of happiness, contentment, and dignity. Souls in that poor dwelling were at peace, nay, happy; for they saw and they delighted in God. The Sisters revered Him in their poor; the poor loved and cherished Him in the persons of their Sisters; and nothing could be more sweet and touching than the outpourings of those poor and happy hearts, at rest, consoled, and full of a holy hope and gratitude. Nor were the Sisters wanting in this latter virtue. Day by day they handled, as it were, the mercies and the goodness of God. In proportion as their wants defined themselves, Divine Providence made haste to satisfy them. We speak, of course, of urgent and indispensable necessities; as to the pleasant and superfluous,

no one thought of desiring it. Besides, they enjoyed those little privations, which, for the love of God, they were able to impose upon themselves.

The little Sisters deem it a privilege to go out, as they call it, to a *foundation*, because then they often have the happiness of finding themselves in want of everything, and able to endure sufferings for the love of God. Under such circumstances they regret neither fatigue nor hardship. The good Mother Marie Louise, of whom we spoke just now, never thinks of complaining that her health was ruined by one of these trying undertakings. Others, reduced to the same, or even a worse, condition, are just as regardless of their sufferings. The Mother General does not frighten herself over her broken health, although her life has been in danger more than once, and her daughters seriously alarmed. Her earliest companion, still her chief assistant, Mother Marie Thérèse, now scarcely thirty years of age, disabled from everything but suffering and prayer,—even Mother Marie Thérèse \* thinks not of complaining; she does the will of God in resigning herself to it completely: formerly she took care of the aged poor, now she submits to be cared for in her turn. What, in fact, has she to regret? Can the beloved Sister Félicité, in that blessed rest from which she smiles on her companions and their poor, regret that her life was exhausted prematurely in these noble labors? And, indeed, all the Little Sisters are tending to the same good end. It is the same end to which they all aspire,—the supreme end enjoyed before attained, which sustains their zeal and their devotion; which makes them ready to suffer all things, to sacrifice their inclinations, their youth, their health, and their life itself; to lose them even, as the world would think, for nothing, if such should be the will of God.

The efforts which the Little Sisters make for the special benefit of the poor, are generally successful;

\* Mother Marie Thérèse died at Rennes, August 12, 1853, First Assistant of the Congregation.



they have the consolation of seeing these neglected souls eagerly embrace the truth, and die happily in their Saviour's arms. But before this grace is obtained, there is often much more required than what is daily fulfilled by the Sisters in the way of praying for the poor creatures under their care,—ministering to their wants, overcoming all natural disgust at their infirmities, and enduring patiently the privations conformable to the poverty of the institute. There are, besides, many rebuffs to be endured. Sweet and consoling as it is to see so many sinners brought back to God, it must not be forgotten at what cost this happy end is brought about. The poor guests of the Little Sisters are not, any more than others, strangers to what is often in France improperly termed the light of civilization and the glory of progress. These lights and glories have done their work amid the depths of degradation to which these poor creatures have sunk; a false and materialistic philosophy just served to withdraw from these poor souls the last check and hindrance to their falling to a level with the brutes. That which is most grievous and repulsive in these wretched creatures, is the ignorance and degradation of their souls. Let us, however, be understood in speaking of ignorance. It exists under all forms in the houses of the Little Sisters. Here is found a sceptic, and there a romantic person. One has read the whole series of philosophy belonging to the eighteenth century, and laughs at the superstition of the Sisters who take care of him; while the other, familiar with the lucubrations of modern romances, aspires towards the Messiah and a religion to be yet revealed. A third, and not the least amiable among them, is versed in poetry, and quotes continually Racine, La Fontaine, or it may be even Horace and Virgil. He is, perhaps, a little demented, but talks well, and has a cultivated mind, knowing just as much of his God as does the sparrow on the housetop. Another, of less cultivation, is a worshipper of the sun: there are many such, especially in the neighborhood of Paris. "It is the

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sun," say they, "who makes the corn grow and the vine ripen. All nature rejoices at his appearing; all suffer or die when he hides himself; he is the source of heat, of life, and of all good; and besides him there is no other god. He also is an accommodating deity; he asks no tedious worship, and suffers men to give unbridled license to their passions, to their pleasures, and their self-debasement." Who can deny that so-called civilization and progress have had their share in bringing about these wretched follies? The Little Sisters have a hard struggle in endeavoring to raise these degraded creatures to a reasonable level, from which they may be capable of knowing, loving, and serving God. Sometimes, they have been almost tempted to despair; oftener, in tendering their advices, or making efforts to repress vice,—drunkenness especially, which is the failing they are most frequently called on to resist,—they have been ill used, and even beaten. But this they regard simply as a happiness; for, to these consecrated beings, everything bears an aspect completely the reverse of that which the world sees and judges. They are in the habit of looking at, and judging of, all things in the light of God, and of crushing the instincts of fallen nature; so that, whenever and however suffering and abjection may arise, they are certain to be welcomed as a blessing and a joy. Possibly (at least it would almost seem to be so) there may enter a little calculation into their profound submission; for it is an undeniable fact, proved amongst them by daily experience, that there is never a sacrifice offered on their part that is not recompensed even before it is accomplished.

During the hardships which had to be encountered in founding the house at Tours, it chanced that, for a short time, the three Sisters had only two straw beds on which to sleep. In accordance with their vow of hospitality, if a poor person applies for admission, and there is no bed to receive her, one of the Sisters gives up hers to the stranger, and provides for herself the best she can. The beds used by the Sisters were not,

in fact, such as would be coveted even by the poorest, consisting, in every weather, merely of a *paillasse*; for so the spirit of poverty and mortification requires. It so happened, then, as we have said just now, that the three Sisters at Tours, having already taken in seven poor old women, had but two straw beds left for their own accommodation; and these they laid close together at night, so as to provide a sufficient resting-place for the three. One single sheet was all they possessed for the further comfort of this common bed. An eighth old woman makes her appearance; she was provided with a bed, but sheets she had none. "My children," said the Superior to her two daughters, "we must cut our sheet in half for this poor woman God hath sent us, and we must manage as we can." No sooner said than done; two Sisters held the sheet outspread, the third held the scissors in the act to cut, when a knock came at the door, and, on its being opened, a young man presented himself with an offering of six pairs of sheets. When the Sister who had opened the door showed these to her companions, they all three fell weeping on their knees, and thanked God. This is one instance, out of thousands we might cite, as happening in each one of their houses, to show the providence and goodness of God.

Sometimes the wonders He works in their behalf are manifested in another form, before which the Sisters are silent in admiring gratitude. Some one gave them, on their first arrival in Tours, a small cast-iron kettle, hardly large enough to make soup in for the Sisters and the first eight or ten old pensioners. The household increased; though the kettle maintained its original dimensions, nevertheless, it still sufficed as heretofore. During many weeks enough soup for fifteen, twenty, and thirty poor people, was daily poured out from the same little kettle. Nor let this fact seem incredible—all those we have related from the beginning of this account are of the same nature; nor is there anything more wonderful in the increase of soup which took place in the kettle of the poor, than in the

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multiplication within the Sisters' hands of all the other resources of which they had need:

It was from Tours that the work of the Little Sisters was to enlarge its borders. The *Univers* newspaper was permitted by God to contribute towards this in some degree. On the occasion of the debate which took place in the National Assembly on the right to relief, announced in the preamble of the Constitution of 1848, the *Univers* had some scruples on the subject, and related what had been done at Tours, St. Servan, Rennes, and Dinan. The decisions of the Assembly were not exactly influenced by this report: such an honor could not have been expected; but a dozen postulants came to the Little Sisters from different parts of France. Like the Sisters from Brittany and Touraine, they were chiefly poor sempstresses, without much money, and only anxious to love and serve God. The Sisterhood being so much increased, they thought of attempting new labors, and decided on making a foundation in Paris. The members of the St. Vincent of Paul Conferences had warmly taken up the idea; and, as we shall have occasion to remark, this was not the only time that the Conferences interested themselves for the Little Sisters.

Towards the spring of 1849, the Mother General and Mother Marie Louise arrived in Paris. A charitable institution,—the House of Nazareth,—as poor as their own, and having, like theirs, the reception of old people for its object, offered them hospitality. The two Breton Sisters were neither perplexed nor dismayed by the task before them. They were quite strangers in Paris, and had never imagined a city so extensive. Armed with a map, they threaded the labyrinths of streets in quest of a house to suit them. They had some trouble in finding what they wanted,—a large, airy, and cheap-rented house, in a quarter which would offer some hope of the necessary resources. One was at last found, and they were on the point of agreeing for it; but unexpected difficulties arose,

and one delay after another succeeded. Nevertheless, it was necessary that they should have daily bread. Some good Nuns of the Visitation, faithful to the spirit of St. Francis of Sales, sent the two strangers some food from their convent. Other charitable souls, anxious to contribute to the new undertaking, came forward with alms. But, in spite of all, God permitted the Little Sisters to go through the same mortification attendant on beggary, which they had experienced at St. Servan. They were often forced to go to the Sisters of Charity's soup-kitchens, and exchange, like other mendicants, a ticket, worth one or two cents, for a portion of soup and vegetables.

It would not do to estimate the virtue of men according to the price they pay for their dinners; and yet we may imagine that it is not the cream of society who visit these kitchens for a dinner of haricots and potatoes. Some of the respectable poor go there; and these, as soon as they have received their portion, make haste to carry it home and share it with their families. Others, settling themselves down in the street or court-yard, eat their portion on the spot: these are generally wretched old people, or miserable children, destitute and depraved, without home or family; lazy, drunkards, given up to all manner of vice, and ready to resort to any means for a living. In 1849, that population presented peculiar characteristics. There was great destitution then in the city; work was scarce, and great excitement prevailed. At the hour of meals there might be seen gathering round these charitable soup-kitchens, men in the prime of life, clad in unimaginable rags, yet preserving in the midst of their poverty the remains of a certain ease of manners, which showed them to be persons who had been accustomed to earn abundance, and throw it away, when earned, in dissipation and extravagance. They had often an expression of cynical impudence in their countenances, and altogether they formed by no means a pleasant company. The Little Sisters,

unknown and buried in the midst of this strange crowd, waited their turn with the others, handing their basins to the little wicket, and then carrying off, at the cost of one or two cents, the dinner of the whole community.

Weeks and months thus passed away. Notwithstanding the miseries of this wretched sort of life, and the weariness of this protracted waiting, which seemed as if it might go on endlessly, the Little Sisters complained of nothing, and only regretted the separation from their companions, the loss of their beloved exercises in community, and, above all, their absence from their dear old people. They persevered in their determination to take root in Paris. They accepted crosses, humiliations, and, so to speak, the forgetfulness of Divine Providence, for no propitious circumstance arose to draw them out of the difficulties in which they were sunk; they offered up everything to God for the advantage of the house they wished to found.

The Mother General, however, being called elsewhere by the necessities of the Congregation, left Mother Marie Louise to the task of pursuing to its close an affair which seemed interminable. Just at that time the cholera began to rage in Paris. In order to employ her idle time to some good purpose, Mother Marie Louise set to work to nurse the poor cholera patients. She was herself attacked by this terrible scourge, and her already broken health was completely shattered. After five long months of waiting and of privations, she found at last, in the street of St. Jacques, at No. 277, the house of which she is now Superior, and which, after being many times enlarged, now contains more than two hundred old people.

Whilst so much trouble was undergone at Paris in the foundation of a house, another was in course of establishment at Nantes. Father Le Pailleur had been invited to go there by the members of the Conferences of St. Vincent of Paul. They soon agreed

about the matter; the Conferences promised their aid; the good father intrusted to his daughters, or rather to Divine Providence, the care of providing for all the wants of the establishment. It would have been difficult to object to such conditions. But, before beginning the undertaking, the good father required that the Capitulary Vicars should authorize it. The See of Nantes was then vacant, and the Little Sisters never established themselves anywhere without the approbation of the bishop of the diocese, and the consent of the parish priest. Some delay occurring in the Capitulary Vicars' reply, M. Le Pailleur was forced to leave Nantes before it arrived.

He left Mother Marie Thérèse, the chief assistant of Mother General, with one companion, there, and gave her twenty francs, saying: "God bless you, my child! Open a house; I shall be back again in three months, and I shall expect to find you surrounded by many poor old people, and with a little room to spare for me." This little sum and this little counsel Mother Marie Thérèse received from the good father with his blessing. She had to wait twenty days for the answer from the Capitulary Vicars, and was almost at her wits' end, having, poor thing, only four francs left. Having already found a suitable house, she hastened to engage it, that they might set to work as soon as possible. The owner asked her, on her arrival, where was her furniture. She had literally nothing beyond a little straw, which she had just bought as a bed for herself and her companion. The landlord was doubtless a good Christian; for he put his trust in God, and gave himself no concern about the security of his rent. The good Sisters made haste to go and seek for the poor. . . . At the end of three months Father Le Pailleur returned. He found the house in full operation, and fully supplied with all that was needful. The sympathy of the town had been aroused in its behalf, and forty old people had been taken in. The good father preached them a little retreat, a large proportion of them were recon-

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ciled with God: in fact, all went on prosperously; nor had the good father himself been forgotten. There was a little chamber in the house appropriated to his use, so watchfully did Providence seem to satisfy even in detail the desires of his faithful children.

It is usual for the Little Sisters in most of the towns to go and ask for contributions in the market-places. At Nantes, as soon as they were settled, one of the Sisters went therefore to the vegetable-market, and begged the market-women, for the love of God, to give her something for her poor old people. "With all my heart!" exclaimed the first woman to whom she spoke,— "with all my heart; the work you have in hand is so truly good!" "Yes, certainly, my Sister," said the next, "for, when I am old, I shall want to come into your house." And so on. They filled three sacks with their contributions, and the Sister was quite overcome with gratitude. She was taking one of the sacks on her shoulders, but it was instantly taken from her by these honest women. "You are not going to carry it," said they; and they made up between them the price for having the whole carried to the asylum. When the Sister left them, they told her to come again every Wednesday and Saturday, adding, "and pray for us."

In the same year, besides these houses at Paris and Nantes, a third was founded at Besançon, at the farther end of France. No delay or difficulty hindered this. A charitable friend had generously prepared everything beforehand, and when the Sisters arrived, they found a house arranged and furnished; they had nothing to do but to receive the poor. So the Sisters, who, under Mother Pauline, the second assistant of the Congregation, went to Besançon, considered that the two Mothers, Marie Louise and Marie Thérèse, had rather monopolized the delightful privilege of suffering, usually attached to founding one of their houses, and that they themselves were unfortunate in having nothing of the sort to go through. The approbation of Mgr. the Archbishop of Besançon had been



given from the beginning. At the first visit they paid him, the good prelate emptied his purse into the Little Sisters' hands: truth compels us to add, that this purse only contained four five-cent pieces: it was all the archbishop had. This little sum he placed before the image of the Blessed Virgin; and, kneeling with the Little Sisters, he sent up a prayer for them to the Comforter of the afflicted. He also bade them call twice a week for the fragments from his frugal table, and, some days after, sent a large donation.

In 1850, houses were founded at Angers, Bordeaux, Nancy, and Rouen. We will not enter into the details of all these several foundations. The story is always the same. At Angers the Sisters took possession of an old chapel, which the priest of the Church of the Trinity, the Rev. Mr. Maupoint, now Bishop of Bourbon Island, had placed at their disposal. There was no yard; a mere paper screen separated the dormitory of the poor from the Little Sisters' room. When one of the old women chanced to die, the Little Sisters had the corpse carried into their room, that the other poor creatures might be spared the painful sight; and there they shrouded and watched beside it during the night. In this chapel, behind this very paper screen, died the good Sister Félicité, of whom we have already spoken. She died in the midst of her poor pensioners, like a soldier on the field of battle. It is needless to say how deeply the town of Angers venerates her memory. We have seen her at the foundation of the house at Tours, where she, in fact, sacrificed her life. Her zeal was, if possible, surpassed by her humility and modesty. It is difficult to speak of her virtues as they deserve; but we are at least certain that they cannot be too highly esteemed. From the very beginning of the Institute the Little Sisters were in the habit of praying, and saying with their old people an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary* every day for that Sister who should die the first. Mother Félicité is the favored one who has laid claim to all these pious prayers. Her very

name seems to have marked her as predestined to enjoy this blessing.

The liberality of the rich, as it may well be supposed, has been a powerful auxiliary in the foundation of all these houses, of which we are sorry not to be able to give the history in detail; but what particularly characterizes the work of the Little Sisters, is popular sympathy. The mite of the poor falls in showers into their hands, under the most various and touching forms. What we have told just now about the market-women at Nantes, takes place under different modifications almost everywhere. At Bordeaux, the butchers and grocers have displayed an almost incredible generosity. At St. Servan, the workmen were not satisfied with helping, as we have said they did, in the labors of building. There are several ship-building yards in this little seaport; one, amongst others, gives employment to nearly five hundred men. These men, in order to take some share in the blessed work of the Little Sisters, have undertaken to levy amongst them the sum of one cent each, weekly; and every Sunday the amount is carried to the asylum for the aged poor. Then there are soldiers who will spare some portions of their soup, and hurry to pour them into the can of the begging Sister. In the same way they will contribute to contribute largely from their allowance of bread, and give it in alms to the poor old people. This characteristic of popular sympathy manifested itself more at Bordeaux and Rouen than anywhere else; in fact, it took the tone of positive enthusiasm in these two places.

A Jesuit father, devoted, like all the members of his holy Society, to the promotion of all that can benefit his neighbor, and do good to souls, felt an ardent desire to induce the Little Sisters to found a house in the latter town. He had fully appreciated the spirit of their Institute, during a visit which he had paid to one of their establishments. It seemed to him that these saintly Sisters were especially suited to do a great work in Rouen, both on account of the misery which

abounds there, and still more on account of the power of their example: a form of preaching which is everywhere so full of virtue. While he thought on this desire so dear to his heart, two Little Sisters came to Rouen—not, however, with any intention of founding a house, but simply on a begging expedition. They were directed to the archbishop's secretary, and to the members of St. Vincent of Paul's Conferences, that leave might be obtained for them to ask alms in the town. A promise was given them that all interest should be used in their behalf, if they, on their part, would engage not to leave Rouen, but try to found an asylum there. The matter was duly weighed and talked over, and they were soon able to write and tell the Superior-General that a house, fit to begin the work in, had been found. It was, of course, impossible to promise success; all they asked was to make the attempt, and it was only prudent to do so with all moderation, and within due limits. It is a serious thing to create in a city a new charitable establishment; and the supports on which the Little Sisters depend always appear so frail, that, until they have been tested, it seems presumptuous to suppose they will sustain any pressure.

The good Mother came to Rouen and examined the house, which was capable of holding forty old people. She saw also a large building, which no one had thought of proposing, and which would lodge two hundred persons; and immediately gave it as her opinion that the smaller house was quite insufficient, and that, in a great city like Rouen, the large building would be by no means too extensive. In vain they reasoned with her, taxed her with imprudence, and persuaded her not to encumber with the rent of four thousand francs an undertaking in behalf of which public sympathy had not yet been tested. The good Mother let them talk, and maintained her first opinion. She had experience; she knew how things had hitherto gone on, and was firm in her conviction that, after so many evidences of God's great goodness

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towards them, however necessary prudence might be, still, confidence should prevail. They let her have her way. A fortnight was quite enough to banish all fears for the future. The house is now quite full; and it is impossible to restrain our admiration at the part which the population of Rouen took in its foundation.\* The first time the Little Sisters appeared in the market-place, there was almost a tumult. They were known already; everybody called them, and, rushing to meet them, eagerly presented some offering. The policemen, charged to keep order, were astonished at this confusion, and were on the point of turning out the innocent Sisters who occasioned it. This made the matter still worse; but an explanation being entered into, things were easily arranged. The Sisters now make a regular circuit of the market, and every one in turn is ready with her little contribution, accompanying it with heartfelt words of grateful kindness. And it is always needful to conduct the matter with discretion and justice; for some of the market-women one day complained to the Superior of the begging Sister that she did not come to them so often as she did to others. Things had to be arranged so as to put an end to the generous complaints. Complaints of the same nature were made at Bordeaux, and transmitted by the Mayor to the Little Sisters. It was at Rouen, in consequence of the size of the city and of the great number of their poor, that the Little Sisters were obliged to make use, for the first time, of an ass to carry their supplies. The ass himself was a gift, with all his appurtenances. When he is seen going along the streets on his way to the market, or from those private houses which he is accustomed to visit regularly, bearing on his back, besides his well-filled panniers, a little inscription which testifies that he belongs to the Little Sisters, and which every one sees with pleasure, the good people of Rouen—who would not like to give him the trouble of stopping at

\* The house has received large additions of several new buildings, and it is now more than double what it was.

their doors every day—hasten out, and deposit with their own hands their little contributions in the Sisters' purse, or the panniers of the attendant ass. Nor are only provisions placed there: clothes, bundles of linen and sheets, drop sometimes from the windows at the Sisters' feet. The ass carries all home; the Little Sisters pray for the benefactors of the poor; and our good Lord knows them all.

The streets of Rouen are narrow, and often very crowded. One day a carriage crushed the panniers of the poor ass, and they fell, with all their contents, rolling in the mud. A workman happened to see the incident, and hastened to help the Sister, and repair the mishap, as far as possible. Alas! in the shock the panniers had been broken. They were patched up with strings, though very unsuccessfully, and the workman went on to his workshop. There he related what he had seen, and the misfortune which had befallen the Little Sister. All his companions were touched by the disaster. They immediately began to subscribe amongst themselves, and that very evening carried in triumph to the Little Sisters two new panniers. Are not these charming stories? One of the principal manufacturers of the city wrote to Father Le Pailleur that he felt himself under infinite obligations to him. "Formerly," said he, "my workmen were full of socialist doctrines; but, since the arrival of the Little Sisters, they alone have been the subject of discourse in the workshops,—their virtue, their devotedness, their necessities. Nor is this a mere unprofitable admiration; it develops itself in all sorts of good deeds, and in countless services which cannot be described. For instance, when their chapel was blessed, it was a festival for the whole city, a popular holiday. The chief benefactors had been invited to the ceremony, at which the Archbishop of Rouen presided. The Mayor and Prefect took part in it, and a large number of workmen were observed to be present. Father Le Pailleur was also there; it was the first time he had been at Rouen.

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The workmen gazed intently upon him, feeling now for him all that admiration with which the lives of his children had inspired them. When the ceremony was over, they pressed round him, kissing his hands and his garments, and insisted on receiving his blessing. Nor were they the only ones who felt this emotion. As the good father was expressing his gratitude to one of the manufacturers of Rouen who had shown very great generosity towards the house, this gentleman, pressing the priest's hands, with tears in his eyes, replied: "It is for me rather to thank you. Before I knew your Sisters, I knew not God. They have shown Him to me; they have taught me to know and to love Him. Now I am at peace—I am a Christian; and it is to you I am indebted for so great a blessing."

Who could, in fact, resist their preaching? It is everywhere full of fruits. One day a mother and daughter made a little plot together, in order to induce the husband and father to pay a visit to the asylum for the aged poor. He was very rich, strongly attached to the wealth of this world, and very indifferent to the teachings of our holy faith and the laws of charity. They induced him to take with him a five-franc piece, which he did most unwillingly, and with every intention not to part with it. He came to the house, saw the Sisters, was astonished at their devotedness and their happiness; saw the poor old women, and was touched by their cheerful demeanor. On his way out, he read over the little box by the door, "Blessed by Jesus and Mary is the hand which drops within one penny for the poor." He dropped in his money without hesitation; the next day he sent one hundred francs, and ever since has been a benefactor to the house. He said once to the Mother: "See, my Mother, by the hand of your poor you will open the gate of heaven for me. Before I knew you, I was a bad Christian, and cared nothing for the poor; but now I love the poor, and our good God." He has, in fact, become a fervent Christian.

This foundation at Rouen, so quickly and so beautifully accomplished, and that at Bordeaux, equally admirable, did not exhaust the zeal of the Little Sisters, in 1851 they founded as many houses as in 1850. Formerly, in the beginning of their labors, whilst simply following the invitations of Divine Providence, they seemed sometimes, as it were, to provoke them. The house at Paris, for instance, which was so difficult to found, by no means triumphed over every obstacle from the time of its inauguration. The Little Sisters had great trouble in making themselves known in so vast a city; all their efforts, combined with those of their most devoted friends, did not produce much fruit for a length of time. The devil would not confess himself beaten; he went on raising all sorts of obstacles; and at the end of several months the house afforded shelter to only twenty poor old women. The resources were scanty, their living poor; it seemed difficult to push matters. The good father came to Paris; he had not been prepared for the obstacles which he found them battling with, and did not know how to deal with them. He thought and prayed, and took counsel with God, and at last made up his mind. "I know what I will do," said he; "we will take in all the poor we possibly can." He desired the Superior to receive all who applied to her; in fifteen days she took in thirty poor people. From that time their resources abounded; the house maintained itself, and they soon began to think of enlarging it.

At that period in the history of the Little Sisters which we are now considering, there was no longer any need to make use of such holy provocations. On the contrary, they had great trouble in responding to the invitations of Providence, and in making themselves sufficient for all the work that presented itself. The good father, beholding so many houses springing up with such rapidity (they had founded seven in eighteen months), perceived that it would not do to hurry things. He was solicited on every side, but refused energetically, deferring any new undertaking

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for eighteen months or two years. That time, at least, he thought would be necessary to provide a sufficient number of Sisters fitted to discharge the duties of so many houses; besides, it was only right, before entering on any new undertaking, that the first Sisters, whose powers had been so greatly taxed, should have a little interval to recover themselves. This space of time was still more indispensable for the training of the new Sisters to the spirit of the rule, and teaching them how to conduct themselves, and keep up houses far from the superintending care of the Mother-General, and the advices of the founder. He himself was astonished at the facility with which he had been able to provide for the numerous foundations that had succeeded each other; and whilst perceiving therein a miracle of Divine Providence for which he thanked God, he would not tempt Him. Before spreading the Institute far and wide, he was very anxious to devote himself to fortifying its spirit, and to take time that he might form members fit to preserve everywhere the exact, and yet ardent and devoted, discipline of the first Mothers. So far his reasoning was very good; but Providence has its ways of judging, too, and they are scarcely likely to be inferior to those of men.

The good father had not spent all his time till 1851, in coming to the conclusions we have spoken of. He had already, over and over again, been filled with wonder at seeing, in the very midst of the Little Sisters, subjects arise and develop themselves with marvellous aptitude into future heads of houses, and at observing around them others exactly fitted to act with them, and fill every necessary place. He would have thought himself going against the will of God, if he had refused to give them up to the posts which cried aloud for them, and for which they were already fitted. He could not do otherwise in 1851; postulants were always numerous; the novices made rapid strides in the religious life; and amongst the old Sisters, those who were destined to become the Mothers, distin-



gushed themselves exactly in proportion as pressing solicitations or special circumstances induced the good father to break through the resolutions he had so honestly determined to keep.

The first time this happened, was on the occasion of a second house being opened in Paris. The National Guard of the 10th Legion besought the help of the Little Sisters to establish a home for the aged poor of the 10th *arrondissement*. The Legion offered a sum of fourteen thousand francs, and desired that to each company of the Legion should be reserved the right of disposing of two beds, on payment of eighty or one hundred francs, according to the sex of the pensioners. The offer was accepted, and they took possession of a large house in the Rue du Regard.\* Notwithstanding the resources guaranteed beforehand, this installation was quite as poor as any that had preceded it. Two Sisters came early in the morning to clean the place up; for the former tenants had but just left it. An officer of the National Guard, who had been one of the principal agents in the affair, met them there on their arrival, and set to work to help them cleaning; as to arranging furniture, they were spared that trouble, for there was not a single article in the house. A poor pensioner arrived, however, a little sooner than they had expected. The officer helped to carry him into one of the rooms, where they made him as comfortable as circumstances would allow. Father Le Pailleur brought with him a supply of furniture, in the shape of an image of the Blessed Virgin, a picture of St. Joseph, and one of St. Augustine. He set the statue on a chimney-piece, and fastened the pictures to the wall; then kneeling down, he repeated with the Sisters an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary*, addressing them afterwards in a few encouraging words, to the effect that God would soon be pleased to fill and to enlarge the house, and commending to the care of his daughters all the poor who might come to dwell there, as if they were indeed

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their mothers. The ceremony, such as it was, was simple enough; but the destitution of the place, the youth of the Sisters, the greatness of their mission, the grateful joy of the poor man just received, and the presence of God, whom they invoked, gave to the whole so touching an aspect, as to bring tears into the eyes of all present. At night they got a bed for the poor man and *paillasses* for the Sisters. From that time the house has been full. Two hundred and fifty poor people now live there, and it has been open seven months.

In the month of June, Monseigneur the Archbishop blessed their chapel. This was a festival in which all the Legion of the National Guard took part. The house was adorned only with the same humility, the same holy poverty, the same grace of the Sisters before God. The crowd of the first functionaries of the State, who pressed into their little chapel, all amongst the sick and aged poor, bore witness also that this humility, poverty, and grace, had potent influence even over men. Monseigneur, in blessing the chapel, expressed a wish that every town in France, and every parish in Paris, might soon become acquainted with the devotedness of the Little Sisters. This desire of the head pastor is already in the way of being accomplished; for they talk at this very time of founding numerous asylums in the different parishes of Paris.\*

A short time afterwards, another house was opened at Laval. The hospital administrators of that city had received a legacy, on condition of their establishing an asylum for old people. The legacy was a noble one: it consisted of a house, extensive gardens, and meadows; but, for the hospital administrators, such a gift was rather a burdensome one, although the meadow-land and gardens were well laid out and productive, and the house in good repair; for there would be furniture required, and the necessary

\* Five are now existing in Paris, each with a population of two or three hundred poor.

expenses of a hospital establishment must be defrayed—infirmary, servants, stewards, directors, and who can tell what besides? The income attached—nay, the whole property—would be far from sufficient to meet so many expenses. Some one thought of the Little Sisters; for they alone possessed the art of making something out of nothing; and of founding hospitals without money. They even do this easily; it has been done over and over again, and the thing has become so natural to them, that they never trouble themselves the least about it. It seems as if they really possessed some secret in the matter.

They willingly accepted the offers made to them at Laval, always reserving to themselves strict independence; for that liberty of action which the Church concedes to those amongst her children who place their wills at her disposal, is in fact absolutely necessary to them in the accomplishment of their holy mission. The house at Laval has been open only a few months; but there is no doubt it will prosper, like all those which have preceded it.

In accepting the material advantages which were offered them in founding some of their houses, the Little Sisters have not renounced the glorious privilege of building their trust solely on the promises of Divine Providence. Their latest foundation recalls the poverty and confiding trust displayed in the establishment of the first houses of the Institute. They came to Lyons without any preparation being made beforehand. They were unknown to almost everybody, and their sole encouragement rested on the good-will of some kind friends who had paid them a visit at Paris. They had no other outward support than the blessing of the Cardinal Archbishop, Monseigneur de Bonald, and that of our Lord Himself to those who seek *first* the kingdom of heaven. As at Tours and at Rennes, a devout friend was found, who was happy to shelter them for a few days. They opened their house December 1, 1851; and it now contains already twenty poor people. Doubtless, in

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this almsgiving city, surrounded as they are by workmen and manufacturers, their house will extend as rapidly as, and bring forth equally consoling fruits with, those of Rouen and Bordeaux.\*

At present (1851) the Congregation of the Little Sisters consists of nearly three hundred Sisters. Who would think of troubling himself concerning the way in which three hundred poor young women, many of them apparently destined, by their birth and education, to become domestic servants or needlewomen, pass the time of their sojourn here on earth? Human wisdom could discover nothing on which to set such lowly and weak instruments to work. But the Providence of God despises them not, and, triumphing in the very midst of such infirmity, takes pleasure, especially in these our times, in making use of them. Our loving and almighty God delights in the little and the lowly; and whilst absurd and ridiculous schemes for the relief of the poor are proposed, discussed, and attempted, at great expense, He confides to these three hundred poor young women the charge of feeding, comforting, and *caring for*, far more efficaciously than all the laws and all the administrations in the world could do, three thousand poor old people in France. *This* is the wonderful part of the whole matter; all the other details are superfluous. *This* is what one single spark of divine charity in a priestly soul is capable of bringing forth. Warned and bound together in its rays, the Little Sisters serve not merely man, however wretched he may be, but God Himself. They give to Him, in the person of His poor, the same consolation which, according to tradition, the holy Veronica rendered to Him long ago upon the road to Calvary. He was then the scorn of men, an object of disgrace and shame before the world; rejected, spit upon, and covered with blood and sweat; the good St. Veronica drew near, and wiped His face with a linen cloth. It is well known how marvel-

\* Two large houses now exist in Lyons, with at least four hundred old people.

lously this action was rewarded, and no Christian can ever think without admiration and envy on this glory of Veronica. That which this holy woman did upon the road to Calvary for Jesus crushed beneath His cross, the Little Sisters of the Poor do from day to day; and our admiration need not now be lessened. They draw near the countenance of Jesus suffering, poor, stripped, outraged, insulted, rejected, and despised; they wipe this divine face with the tenderest mercy and the greatest love. St. Veronica of old, in rendering her act of love to her Divine Master, had everything to brave,—the hootings of the crowd, the violence of the soldiers, and the universal contempt which had succeeded the triumphal entry of the Lord into Jerusalem; a contempt so withering and so strong, that the disciples had fled, and Peter had denied his Master. The Little Sisters of the Poor have now triumphed over the wisdom of this world and the desires of nature; they offer violence to nature constantly, always going against its inclinations. It is not enough for them to be obliged to overcome all repugnance towards these old people, covered with disgusting infirmities; besides the necessary care given to these poor creatures, in whom faith teaches the Sisters to behold the divine features of their Lord, they must themselves drink the chalice of humiliation and of poverty,—a poverty so excessive that nothing we have said can give a true idea of it to those who have not yet been admitted behind the scenes.

In fact everything is wanting, and all at the same time, in the house of the Little Sisters. They find themselves every moment in urgent need of the commonest and most indispensable articles of furniture. It is not only of beds, *paillasses*, and sheets we speak: of these a house lately founded is sure to be scarce for a longer or shorter time; but houses long established, and for which public charity, though still alive, has not all the activity of early times, when everybody knew the poor Sisters were in want of all things—many of these houses are even still nearly destitute of

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*chairs*, for example : the old people may each have one, but the Sisters have to do without them. This want of chairs used to be so customary in their houses, that the Sisters have generally acquired the habit of *sitting on their heels*. Willingly, in this lowly attitude, and with hearts still more abased, they listen to the instructions of their Father and the counsels of their Mother in the community-room. One day a Jesuit father came to visit one of their houses, and entered the refectory just when the Sisters were sitting down to table. They had no glasses, but instead cups of all sizes, jam-pots, mustard-pots, all cracked and broken, and in such a state that the good father commissioned the very next penitent who came to him to send in immediately a dozen glasses to the asylum. We give these details because they record a state of things hitherto only glanced at; for it is necessary either to guess or to find out these deficiencies—the Little Sisters are most careful not to mention them; they go out begging for their poor, and they receive with gratitude whatever is given, but they never ask anything for themselves. They are fearful of abusing the goodness which is shown them, and always think a great deal too much is done for them, and far more than they deserve.

In the very midst of this destitution, which we must imagine as complete as it can be, we have already spoken strongly of the happiness and innocent joy of the Little Sisters. Joy comes from the soul, and springs from the innermost recess of the conscience. Who can guess with what peaceful yet sublime ecstasy St. Veronica was transported and enlightened when she perceived the divine impression of her Saviour's face upon the linen cloth ! The Little Sisters experience a like rapture as they recognize the same sacred lineaments breaking forth upon the souls committed to their charge. Nor does this sensation of delight pall upon them by reiteration. Every poor old creature who comes back to God, gives occasion for a real festival to these noble hearts.

This festival is happily one of frequent recurrence, and every care is taken that the rejoicing shall not be in vain. It is usual in freshly-founded houses to preach a retreat as soon as they have received a few poor people. The fruits of this retreat secure a little nucleus of devout souls, and they in their turn labor to win over to God's service the future companions sent them by His Providence. Nothing can be compared with the rapture of these poor reconciled souls: they embrace the Sisters with tears of joy, and dance around them, unable fully to express their happiness and gratitude. "Seventy-five years have passed away," said one of them, "without my drawing near to God, and now to-morrow I shall receive Him." Not one amongst the guests of these blessed houses could resist this grace of charity which God kept for them at the end of all the trials of their sad career. They fully appreciate this mercy, and praise it. After his confession, a poor barber who had been reduced to misery by a severe rheumatic affection of the fingers, which disabled him from following his vocation, was observed contemplating his poor feeble hands, and upon being asked what he was looking at so earnestly, his answer was, "I am considering the finger of God." This resignation and this gratitude abound everywhere. The happiness of the Sisters is easily understood; they made their choice, and voluntarily embraced abjection, poverty, humility, and self-sacrifice; it is of their own determination that they have taken their way of life, and chosen their vocation. But as regards the wretched creatures whom they take care of, these old people, some of them lost in vice, and who during so many years had not drawn near to God in the sacrament of reconciliation, but had dragged on their miserable lives in a continual revolt against all duties and all laws,—is it anything short of a miracle to see them happy, contented, comforted, attached to their Sisters, and full of heavenly confidence? The hand of God must indeed be there. With the guidance of this loving hand all prospers

and increases. There is nothing melancholy in the homes opened by the Little Sisters. Everywhere, in the midst of the most delightful neatness, peace reigns and joy attends. Most of the old people declare that they never in their lives were so happy before; nor is this wonderful, for now they have consciences at peace. Besides, the Sisters, in caring for and attending on them, find means to pay them all sorts of delicate little kindnesses, to which the poor people respond by affectionate caresses. Being treated like children, they soon acquire a childish turn, a freedom from care, a frank and happy laugh, simplicity and cheerfulness: cheerfulness, above all things, is called forth and encouraged by the Sisters. They sing, and get the poor old people to sing also and get merry.

Every opportunity is taken for those joyful treats: the Mother's or some Sister's festival day, some addition to the building, and a hundred other things. At these times there is always some neighboring benefactor who is glad to turn the usual dinner of the poor old people into a little feast, which they enjoy like children, thanking God. Who, indeed, would not be happy to be the donor of these innocent feasts? Not long ago the house at Rouen celebrated the anniversary of its foundation. The poor old woman who had been received first into the asylum was queen of the day. The arm-chair was ornamented with flowers, and her gray head crowned; whilst her companions, full of mirth, cheered her heartily, enjoying this little triumph of one as old and destitute as themselves.

Above all, religious ceremonies are invested with a most touching charm in the houses of the Little Sisters of the Poor. The festivals of the Blessed Virgin, blessing the chapel, setting up the Stations of the Cross, and the like, are eagerly taken advantage of. We, one day, had the happy privilege of assisting at the procession on the Feast of Corpus Christi. The good Sisters, though wearied by their daily labors, had spent several nights in decking the reposi-



ories. The Blessed Sacrament was carried by one of the assistant priests of the parish, who had brought some choir-boys to bear candles and censers. The procession was composed of all the poor old men and women of the house who were able to walk. They all preceded the Blessed Sacrament as it passed slowly through the narrow pathways of their little garden. The Sisters sang the hymns, and the chorus was repeated by the halting, faltering, coughing poor creatures. Along the walks and round the repositories, kneeling or sitting in deep and pious reverence, were those aged and afflicted ones who could not join in the procession without some danger of disturbing its measured pace, whilst at every window those more feeble still, who could not be carried from their bed or their arm-chair, were waiting reverently, their hands clasped and their rosaries between their fingers, for the benediction of Him who delights to dwell with the poor and lowly.

It is in the midst of these holy impressions, thus cared for, watched over, and kept happy, that these poor creatures grow accustomed to love and to enjoy their God. In this peaceful happiness, poor yet respected, they prepare themselves for the blessedness of heaven, and look forward to it with unbroken calm.

We saw one of these poor old women the very day on which she had been prepared for death by the last sacraments. On being asked how she felt, her answer was, "Very happy, very happy. I hope that God will give me a place in His Paradise, and that I shall soon be there." And she begged the prayers of those around her. As she lay there in her snow-white bed, her hands clasped, and her rosary between her fingers, so venerable, and entirely at peace, it seemed as if one might well envy her the grace of such a death. She had been taken into the asylum just as she was driven out of doors by her own children, grown weary of her maintenance. She had found it at first impossible to forgive them for their cruelty; but she had learned the lessons of her Divine Saviour amongst the Little

Sisters. She died with full forgiveness in her heart, and hope and joy upon her lips; gentle, calm, and, as she herself in the very sweetest tone expressed it, *very happy*.

We never should have done were we to record all the beautiful and edifying scenes which pass within the houses of the Little Sisters. Heart and mind alike revel in these details; they prove that all is not yet lost amongst us, and that there still is found a place for devotedness, self-sacrifice, and charity.

Whilst Socialistic and Materialistic doctrines,—the natural and necessary fruit of those theories of progress which are everywhere promulgated in our days in books and periodicals,—whilst these impious doctrines are spreading all around us, creating on all sides those tastes for animal enjoyments which already disgrace and frighten our age, the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor, like a protest from the spirit of faith and of piety, like a token of mercy and a fountain of blessing, was springing up and making its way everywhere.

Nothing stops this blessed work. Their fourth house was bought at the time of the Revolution in 1848; the fifteenth and the sixteenth are just about to be opened now at Marseilles and Lille. Let us hope that this work will go on increasing yet more rapidly; that the primitive spirit may remain ever the same as at present, and that ere long every town in France may be acquainted with the Little Sisters of the Poor. Never did the world stand in more dire need of prayers and of charity, or of a reverential love for poverty.

POSTSCRIPT, 1882.—Now that this little pamphlet is being reprinted, we were anxious to render it more complete, by bringing it down to the present date, and narrating what has been done by the Little Sisters of the Poor these thirty-five years; but the magnitude of the task overwhelms us.

The little work begun at St. Servan has become one of the most powerful manifestations of charity in this, our time. Three thousand five hundred Little Sisters have embraced the way of life which was first attempted in the lowly lodging of Fanchon Aubert by Marie de la Compassion, Marie Therese and Marie de la Croix (Jeanne Jugan). They feed and care for twenty-five thousand poor old people, etc. The Little Sisters have now more than two hundred and ten houses in France, Alsace, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Algeria, England, Scotland, Ireland, the United States, and India, etc., as in the first edition.

As in the eyes of the faithful, this number of houses, great though it be, is not at all sufficient to prove the existence of a religious family, we may add that, by a decree dated July 9, 1854, the Sovereign Pontiff approved the Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor, founded by Father Le Pailleur, now Superior General of this little family, which has been from the beginning under his direction.

The Congregation was also admitted to the privilege of legal recognition by an imperial decree, dated January 9, 1856.

The Little Sisters live under the rule of St. Augustine, with constitutions adapted to their mode of life.

The House of Novices, which was established at Rennes, becoming too small, has been transferred to the Tour St. Joseph, near Becherel, diocese of Rennes. In the month of July, 1856, Mgr. Godfroy St. Marc, always so kindly disposed towards this work, inaugurated and solemnly blessed, in the midst of a great concourse of priests, this new house for novices, which at present contains about five hundred novices and postulants, from France, England, Spain, America, etc., who have come there to form themselves to the life of self-denial and devotedness of a Little Sister of the Poor.

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## APPENDIX.

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### THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR IN AMERICA.

THE charitable work of the Little Sisters of the Poor, which commenced so humbly at St. Servan, and which spread itself so rapidly in all the principal cities of the Old World, was admirably calculated to develop itself in the large cities of the New World, where there are so many aged and infirm persons without means of support. Many have labored hard, and brought up a family, but their children have scattered, each seeking his own fortune, and too often forgetting their poor parents, who are thus left in want and poverty in their old age.

Many an emigrant lands on these shores with but little means, but he trusts in his health, activity, and willingness to work, for the support of his family. In general, that is all he can do; and when age and infirmities come upon him, what resource is left to him? None other than the almshouse. There, it is true, the wants of his body will be supplied; but alas, how cold is this official charity! how strong the prejudice against these establishments, so that many would rather starve than seek a shelter under their roof! Another motive which deters many aged poor from applying for admission into the almshouses is, that when they are Catholics, they would wish to be surrounded in their declining years with the consolations which their religion afforded them in their youth; they wish to resume the practice of those religious duties which the excitements and cares of business may have caused them to neglect, perhaps, for a time, but the love of which is written deep in their hearts. In many State institutions the priest, no doubt, is occasionally allowed to come and perform the duties of his ministry; but these transient visits do not satisfy the cravings of his soul.

Besides the emigrants from Europe, many natives of the United States, in reduced circumstances, come to ask a home from the Little Sisters of the Poor. In a country where fortunes are made so rapidly, they are often lost as quickly; and although the natural energy and activity of the Americans lead them to struggle nobly with adversity, and thus often regain what they have lost, still, when old age comes, after misfortunes nothing remains but the resource offered by Christian charity. A perusal of the list of inmates in the Homes of the Little Sisters, in New Orleans, Richmond, Washington, etc., would show that many of them were persons who had known better days, and enjoyed all the comforts of life.

In these Homes are found persons of all nationalities, languages, creeds, and occupations: thus is shown the truly Catholic, or universal, character of this institution of charity. No distinction is made as to country or persuasion. It is true that the Catholic element predominates; but not the slightest interference is ever made with the religion of the Protestant inmate, who can quietly, if he chooses, read his Bible by the side of the good old Irishman devoutly reciting his rosary. The loving, tender care of the Sisters, their thousand daily kindnesses for their dear old people, win their hearts, and remove the prejudices which their non-Catholic inmates might have formed against the Catholic religion.

This influence of true Christian devotedness, as exercised by the Little Sisters, is felt not only by those who come in daily contact with them, but it exerts itself beyond the limits of their Home. Many a negligent Christian has been animated to renewed fervor and love of God, by witnessing the life of faith and self-denial of the Little Sisters. Others have received the gift of faith, and have been enlightened as to the source from whence these Sisters derive their strength to persevere in their holy calling. A Protestant reporter of one of our large newspapers, after visiting the house, said to one of the Little Sisters: "The half hour which I have passed here, Sister, has removed more prejudices from my mind than had accumulated, during twenty years, against the Catholic religion; for actions speak more efficaciously than words, and 'by their fruits ye shall know them.'"

In the performance of their arduous task, the Little Sisters are sustained by two considerations: the first is, the certainty, acquired by experience, that, as soon as their Homes are erected, they will be supported here—in the United States—as well as in Europe, by their daily collections of money, food, or clothing; for a large number of poor people can be well supported with what is wasted in many households. The second, and by far the most important, is, that the good to be realized is immense. Instead of leaving these poor old, forlorn persons to the cold charity of the world, deprived of religious consolations, of the sacraments, of all that cheers and brightens their declining

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years; to offer them a home, in the fullest sense of the word, where every comfort is given them, both for body and soul; to nurse them in sickness; to dress their wounds; to smooth their pillows with gentle hands; to cheer them with loving words, and assuage their pains,—this is the constant aim of the Little Sister, whose whole life is devoted to the temporal and spiritual welfare of her dear old children. Thus does she succeed in leading their thoughts to the source of all good, so that many of their inmates have learned to bless the hand of God, who led them, by the road of poverty, to this haven of rest.

The Little Sisters have found a generous cooperation in their good work in the United States, for Americans are liberal in their views, and naturally charitable; they admire that devotedness which leads noble souls to receive and care for the most helpless and miserable members of society, and willingly aid them in their efforts, by generous contributions, by bequests, and, in some instances, by State appropriations, viz.: by Congress at Washington, and by the Legislature at Albany.

We will now proceed to give a short account of the different houses established by the Little Sisters of the Poor, since they began their work of charity in the United States.

As early as 1856, several influential Catholics from New York, who had visited houses of the Little Sisters during their sojourn in Europe, and who had witnessed the happiness of the old people under their care, were desirous of seeing similar houses provided for the aged poor of their own city. On their return, they conferred on the subject with the illustrious Archbishop Hughes, who eagerly entered into their views, and promised to visit the Superior of the Little Sisters of the Poor during the journey which he intended making to Europe; but political events, which occurred there at that time, prevented him from putting his project into execution.

A few years later, his Grace, Archbishop Odin, of New Orleans, visited the Mother-house of the Little Sisters, and, in an interview with the founder, Rev. Father Le Pailleur, warmly pleaded the cause of the aged poor of Louisiana. Other petitions, either personally or by letter, had been made at various times, by bishops or zealous laymen, from the United States; but, owing to the scarcity of subjects, who, although very numerous, were not sufficiently so to supply the wants of the houses already established in Europe, the opening of houses in the United States had to be deferred. Archbishop Odin was not discouraged by these delays; he paid a second visit to the reverend founder, and renewed his request for Little Sisters, with such persuasive eloquence, that the Superiors felt that it was a manifestation of God's will, and that the time had come to send their spiritual children to a distant land, young indeed, but full of hopes for the Church, and where everything concurred to insure a favorable reception to these new messengers of charity.

In May, 1868, the Rev. Ernest M. Lelievre, a priest attached

to the Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor, sailed from Cork, to prepare the way, and make the necessary arrangements for the introduction of the Little Sisters in the United States. He was most cordially welcomed by the hierarchy and laity; and the Rev. Annet Lafont, of the Church of St. Vincent de Paul, of New York, introduced him to the zealous Bishop of Brooklyn, who immediately granted all necessary facilities for the commencement of this new work of Catholic charity in his diocese; and, since their arrival, Bishop Laughlin has continued to be the warm friend of the Little Sisters. Brooklyn was selected for the establishment of the first house in the United States, as it would be a pleasant and convenient resting-place for the Sisters who would arrive later on, to take charge of other houses. On the 28th of August, 1868, Feast of St. Augustine, under whose rule the Sisters live, and which was also the festival day of the reverend founder, seven Little Sisters who had been selected to form the first colony, left home, country, and friends, burning with generous zeal for the welfare of the poor old people of America. They started from the Novitiate, under the guidance of the Mother-General, who accompanied them as far as Brest, where they embarked on board the steamer which was to convey them to their new field of labor.

After a favorable voyage across the Atlantic, they landed in New York on the 13th of September, and proceeded to the new residence which had been hired for them, at No. 608 De Kalb Avenue, Brooklyn, consisting of three adjoining houses, and capable of sheltering about forty old people. They remained there about eighteen months, after which they secured a plot of ground pleasantly situated on the corner of Bushwick and De Kalb avenues, and commenced the erection of one wing of their present home. They were enabled to enlarge it by an appropriation which the Legislature at Albany made to them for that purpose, in 1870. Since then, other additions have been made, and the Home, which is now nearly completed, will accommodate about two hundred and forty inmates.

The sympathy which was shown to the Little Sisters on their first arrival, far from diminishing, has gone on increasing. The more they were known, the more they were loved and appreciated by the generous inhabitants of Brooklyn, whose liberality enables them to provide for the daily wants of their old and helpless *protégés*: and what is said here of the kind feelings of the population of Brooklyn towards the Little Sisters, can equally be said of all the cities where they have opened Homes in the United States.

The work of the Little Sisters is carried on here, precisely as it is in Europe. Every day two Sisters go forth with their wagon, and call at the various hotels, restaurants, and private houses, where they are allowed to apply, collecting cold victuals, coffee-grounds, tea, old-clothing, etc., all which will be turned to good use for the benefit of their aged inmates.

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Butcher-shops, groceries, breweries, etc., are also visited, and contribute largely to the support of the Homes. Other Sisters go on foot, from door to door, soliciting alms for their dear old people, receiving, with the same thankfulness, the penny of the poor and the dollar of the rich; the rebuffs and insults of some ignorant persons, and the generous offering of the cheerful giver; circulating as quietly under their dark religious cloak, along the crowded thoroughfares of our cities, as if they were in Lyons or Brussels; objects of momentary curiosity to some that pass them by, but respected by all, Catholics and Protestants, who, at least in their hearts, pay homage to the true charity of the Sisters, and admire the greatness and heroism of their devotedness. The tree, imported from France, was planted in a rich and fertile soil, and it spread forth its branches with wonderful rapidity. A few weeks after the installation of the Little Sisters in Brooklyn, a second colony arrived in New York, on their way to open a house in Cincinnati. In December of the same year, the Sisters who were to take charge of the third house arrived in New Orleans, and were cordially welcomed by the warm-hearted Creole population, and by the venerable archbishop, who had struggled so hard to secure their charitable ministrations for the benefit of the aged poor, who were the objects of his paternal solicitude.

Requests for the establishment of new houses were pouring in from all directions. In 1869, four houses were opened, viz.; Baltimore, St. Louis, Philadelphia, and Louisville. The succeeding year saw the establishment of houses in Boston, Cleveland, and New York, followed by those of Washington, Albany, and Alleghany.

The most sanguine hopes of the friends of the Little Sisters have been realized; in almost every large city of the Union houses have been opened, to which the aged poor flock in crowds, seeking admission. When the Mother-Provincial, who had visited all the houses in the United States, returned, in 1872, to give an account of her visit, to the Superiors, in France, she could candidly say that the thirteen houses already established could compare very favorably with the older houses of Europe.

During the interval between 1873 and 1882, fifteen new houses have been commenced, thus making twenty-eight houses of the Little Sisters scattered over the United States within a sisterhood of three hundred and thirty members, ministering to the wants of about three thousand five hundred poor old men and women, without distinction to creed, color or nationality.

This charitable work, which has commenced so successfully, which has been visibly blessed by God from its humble beginning, will, we trust, go on increasing every day. We have said that the soil of America was rich and fertile; not only will there be found the necessary resources to feed and clothe the needy, but God will speak, as He already has done, to the



hearts of noble and generous souls, and will lead them to unite themselves with the Little Sisters in their life of abnegation and devotedness to God's chosen poor, so that, at the last day, they may hear those consoling words addressed to them: "I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; thirsty, and ye gave me to drink; naked, and ye covered me. Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

There are to-day two hundred and twelve houses, of which ninety-seven are in France, twelve in Belgium, seventeen in England, three in Scotland, three in Ireland, forty in Spain, twenty-eight in America, three in Africa, six in Italy, three in Sicily, one in the Island of Malta, and one in India (Asia):

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|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1—1840. St. Servan.                | 27—1853. Liège, Belgium.           |
| 2—1846. Rennes.                    | 28—1853. Bolbec.                   |
| 3—1846. Dinan.                     | 29—1853. London, St. Peter's House |
| 4—1847. Tours.                     | 30—1853. Paris, Rue Picpus.        |
| 5—1849. Nantes.                    | 31—1854. Toulouise.                |
| 6—1849. Paris, Rue St. Jacques.    | 32—1854. St. Dizier.               |
| 7—1849. Besançon.                  | 33—1854. Le Havre.                 |
| 8—1850. Angers.                    | 34—1854. Blois.                    |
| 9—1850. Bordeaux.                  | 35—1854. Brussels.                 |
| 10—1850. Ronen.                    | 36—1854. Le Mans.                  |
| 11—1850. Nancy.                    | 37—1854. Tarare.                   |
| 12—1851. Paris, Avenue de Breteuil | 38—1854. Paris, Rue Notre-Dame     |
| 13—1851. London, Portobello Rd.    | des Champs.                        |
| 14—1851. Laval.                    | 39—1855. Orléans.                  |
| 15—1851. Lyon, La Vilette.         | 40—1856. Strasburg.                |
| 16—1852. Lille.                    | 41—1856. Le noviciat et la Maison- |
| 17—1852. Marseilles.               | Mère à la Tour Saint Joseph en     |
| 18—1852. Bourges.                  | Saint-Pern, Ille et Vilaine.       |
| 19—1852. Pau.                      | 42—1856. Caen.                     |
| 20—1852. Vannes.                   | 43—1856. Saint-Etienne.            |
| 21—1852. Colmar.                   | 44—1856. Perpignan.                |
| 22—1852. La Rochelle.              | 45—1856. Louvain.                  |
| 23—1852. Dijon.                    | 46—1856. Montpellier.              |
| 24—1855. St. Omer.                 | 47—1857. Jemmapes, Belgium.        |
| 25—1852. Brest.                    | 48—1857. Ogen.                     |
| 26—1853. Chartres.                 | 49—1857. Pottiers.                 |

- 50—1868. Saint Quentin.  
 51—1868. Lisieux.  
 52—1868. Annouay.  
 53—1859. Amiens.  
 54—1859. Roanne.  
 55—1860. Valenciennes.  
 56—1860. Grenoble.  
 57—1860. Draguignan.  
 58—1860. Châteauroux.  
 59—1860. Roubaix.  
 60—1860. Boulogne-sur-mer.  
 61—1861. Dieppe.  
 62—1861. Béziers,  
 63—1861. Clermont-Ferrand.  
 64—1861. Genève, Switzerland.  
 65—1861. Lyon, Croix-Rousse.  
 66—1861. Metz.  
 67—1862. Manchester, England.  
 68—1862. Bruges, Belgium.  
 69—1862. Nice.  
 70—1862. Lorient.  
 71—1862. Nevers.  
 72—1862. Flers.  
 73—1862. Glasgow, Scotland.  
 74—1862. Bristol, England.  
 75—1863. Villefranche.  
 76—1863. Cambrai.  
 77—1863. Barcelone, Spain.  
 78—1863. Dundee, Scotland.  
 79—1863. Namur, Belgium.  
 80—1863. Manrèse, Spain.  
 81—1863. Edinburgh, Scotland.  
 82—1863. Anvers, Belgium.  
 83—1863. Niort.  
 84—1863. Grenade.  
 85—1864. Birmingham, England.  
 86—1864. Paris, Rue Philippe de Girard.  
 87—1864. Lerida, Spain.  
 88—1864. Lorca, Spain.  
 89—1865. Malaga, Spain.  
 90—1865. Antequera, Spain.  
 91—1865. Plymouth, England.  
 92—1865. Les Sables d'Olonne.  
 93—1865. Troyes.  
 94—1865. Leeds, England.  
 95—1866. Ostende, Belgium.
- 96—1866. Newcastle - on - Tyne, England.  
 97—1866. Nanbeuge.  
 98—1867. Madrid, Spain.  
 99—1867. Nîmes.  
 100—1867. Toulon.  
 101—1867. Jaen, Spain.  
 102—1867. Tourcoing.  
 103—1867. Cherbourg.  
 104—1867. Valence.  
 105—1868. Périgueux.  
 106—1868. Waterford, Ireland.  
 107—1868. Reus, Spain.  
 108—1869. Brooklyn, near New York, America.  
 109—1868. Cincinnati, America.  
 110—1868. Algiers, Africa.  
 111—1868. New Orleans, America  
 112—1868. Dunkerque.  
 113—1869. Reims.  
 114—1869. Baltimore, America.  
 115—1869. St. Louis, America.  
 116—1869. Vic-en-Bigorre.  
 117—1869. Philadelphia, America  
 118—1869. Louisville, America.  
 119—1869. Cannes.  
 120—1869. Aoste, Italy.  
 121—1870. Boston, America.  
 122—1870. Cleveland, America.  
 123—1870. New York, America.  
 124—1871. Washington, America.  
 125—1871. Albany, America.  
 126—1872. Huesca, Spain.  
 127—1872. Allegheny, America.  
 128—1872. Salamanca, Spain.  
 129—1873. Indianapolis, America.  
 130—1873. Gand, Belgium.  
 131—1873. Grasse.  
 132—1873. Troy, America.  
 133—1873. Rochefort.  
 134—1873. Chantenay.  
 135—1873. Lons-le-Saunier.  
 136—1873. Detroit, America.  
 137—1874. Saint-Pierre les Calais.  
 138—1874. Charleroi, Belgium.  
 139—1874. Mataro, Spain.  
 140—1874. Richmond, America.

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 of abnegation  
 at the last day,  
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 Italy, three in  
 Asia):

gium.

. Peter's House  
 Picpus.

Notre-Dame

et la Maison-  
 at Joseph en  
 laine.

e.

Belgium.

- 141—1874. Liverpool, England.  
 142—1874. Autun.  
 143—1875. Birkenhead, England.  
 144—1875. Jerez - de - la - Frontera, Spain.  
 145—1875. Limoges.  
 146—1875. Cork, Ireland.  
 147—1875. St. Denis.  
 148—1876. Milwaukee, America.  
 149—1876. Chicago, America.  
 150—1876. Auch.  
 151—1876. London, St. Anne, England.  
 152—1877. Palma, Isles Majorques.  
 153—1877. Rive-de-Gier.  
 154—1877. Zamora, Spain.  
 155—1877. Tarragone, Spain.  
 156—1877. Saintes.  
 157—1877. Armentières.  
 158—1877. Vienné en Dauphiné.  
 159—1877. Cadiz, Spain.  
 160—1877. San Lucar de Barrameda, Spain.  
 161—1878. Pampelune, Spain.  
 162—1878. La Valette, Malta.  
 163—1878. Murcie, Spain.  
 164—1878. Manchester, England.  
 165—1878. Seville, Spain.  
 166—1878. Catane, Sicily.  
 167—1878. Médini Sidonia, Spain.  
 168—1878. Newark, America.  
 169—1878. Vitoria, Spain.  
 170—1878. Eclja, Spain.  
 171—1878. St. Sébastian.  
 172—1878. Gérone, Spain.  
 173—1878. Basza, Spain.  
 174—1879. Plasencia.  
 175—1879. Naples, Italy.  
 176—1879. Bilbao, Spain.  
 177—1879. Lyon, Vaise.  
 178—1879. Tortosa, Spain.  
 179—1879. Carcassonne.  
 180—1879. Caccères.  
 181—1880. South Brooklyn, America.  
 182—1880. La Madellene-les-Lille.  
 183—1880. Brighton, England.  
 184—1880. Germantown, Pa., America.  
 185—1880. Liverpool, England.  
 186—1880. Rome, Italy.  
 187—1880. Carlisle, England.  
 188—1880. Toledo, Spain.  
 189—1881. Valladolid, Spain.  
 190—1881. Providence, America.  
 191—1881. Acrèale, Sicily.  
 192—1881. Preston, England.  
 193—1881. St. Joseph, New York, America.  
 194—1881. Bone, Africa.  
 195—1881. St. Michel, Brussels, Belgium.  
 196—1881. Osuna, Spain.  
 197—1881. Turin, Italy.  
 198—1881. St. Augustine, Barcelona, Spain.  
 199—1881. Dublin, Ireland.  
 200—1881. Tunis, Africa.  
 201—1882. Le Ferrol, Spain.  
 202—1882. Carthagène, Spain.  
 203—1882. Milan, Italy.  
 204—1882. Messine, Sicily.  
 205—1882. St. Peter, Cincinnati, America.  
 206—1882. Evansville, America.  
 207—1882. Kansas City, America.  
 208—1882. Sheffield, England.  
 209—1882. Florence, Italy.  
 210—1882. N. Chicago, America.  
 211—1882. Calcutta, India, (Asia).  
 212—1882. New Orleans, America.

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