

Roman Empire were, as LECKY says, 'essentially male'—such as a PORTIA or an ARRIA, or the mother of the GRACCHI, who, with dry eyes, beheld the sacrifice of her children. Christianity, without unsexing woman, has transfigured her by cultivating to the highest point the virtues proper to her nature. In the Catholic Church—and mainly through the veneration of MARY, that peerless pearl of all womanhood—woman for the first time in history ceased to be a chattel of man. She found her true place and meaning in the plan of creation. She dropped quietly and naturally into her work in the Church, even under the very eyes of the Apostles. But her *role* was not that of a priestess or preacher. She was the saint and martyr, like the virgins FELICITAS and AGNES and CECILIA; the glorified house-mother that brings her errant son to GOD, as did the mothers of SS. AUGUSTINE, CHRYSOSTOM, and BASIL; above all, she was the eager soldier of charity, like the Empress FLACILLA, like FABIOLA and her companions, and the countless company of widows and consecrated virgins who founded and carried on hospitals and other works of benevolence such as had never been dreamed of in the philosophy of the pagan world.

This 'Heaven's army on earth' has been steadily gaining in numbers and strength down the course of the centuries, and was never at any period so well equipped to cope with every form of human suffering and woe as at the present time. It acts quietly and without noise or jar—like those other silent forces of God that grind the valleys smooth and shape the contour of the hills. This great woman's army of charity is composed of hundreds of regiments, as various in name and uniform as in activities. An honored place among this noble throng has been won by hard toil and noble sacrifice by the Sisters of Mercy, to whom belongs that devoted band of nuns who, at their local headquarters in Auckland, have just been celebrating the golden jubilee of the arrival of their Order in New Zealand. Just 50 years have gone by since Mother CECILIA MAHER and seven other Sisters of Mercy, from Carlow, arrived in Auckland with Bishop POMPALIER, amidst the welcome greetings of both the Catholic and the non-Catholic population of the fair northern city. Their work was one of education and of charity—schools, orphanages, and Homes or Providences for Maori girls. The admirable services which they have rendered to the cause of religion are well summed up in the following words from Cardinal MORAN'S *History of the Catholic Church in Australasia* (p. 906):—

They proved themselves true apostles to both the Europeans and the natives in Auckland and throughout the whole diocese. Amid all the vicissitudes of that diocese, when missions were forsaken, and when difficulties arose such as seldom have befallen a colonial diocese—for that suffering Church was for years encompassed on every side with the terrors and ravages of savage warfare, and with its direful consequences, dissensions, desolation, ruin, and a crushing burden of debt—nevertheless, throughout that trying period St. Mary's Convent of Mercy in Auckland was a true fortress of the Faith and preserved and handed on to the faithful of the diocese the traditions of piety and the blessings of religion.

God has abundantly blessed the good work that was persevered in with such heroic constancy among the poor, the sick, and the ignorant in the days of storm as well as in those of sunshine. The modest little convent of 1850 has developed into a great establishment, with nine flourishing branches in Auckland diocese alone; the little company of eight has grown into 78 religious and 19 novices; several large and well-equipped foundations in the Wellington archdiocese owe their origin directly or indirectly to the original mother-house by the Waitemata; and the Ecclesiastical Province of New Zealand now counts among its devoted band of 626 nuns no fewer than 221 Sisters of Mercy, distributed among 24 Houses of their Order.

The Institute of our Blessed Lady of Mercy, which so well deserves of New Zealand and of the whole English-speaking world, was one of the providential outcomes of that springtime of hopefulness and religious activity which was ushered in by the relaxation of the penal code and the movement towards Catholic Emancipation that began in Ireland over a century and a quarter ago. The new impulse found its first expression in 1777 when NANO NAGLE founded the Presentation Order for the education of poor children exclusively. After a lull, it burst forth again with

great activity in the troubled years that followed the insurrection of 1798; and, in rapid succession, the Christian Brothers were founded by EDMUND RICE at Waterford in 1802, the Brigidines by Miss M. C. DAWSON at Tullow in 1806, the Irish Sisters of Charity by Miss AIKENHEAD in 1815; and, at later periods, the Loretto Nuns, the Presentation Brothers, the Brothers of St. PATRICK, etc. The Institute of our Lady of Mercy dates from 1827—the days of O'CONNELL and SHIEL and the agitation for Catholic Emancipation. Its foundress was Miss CATHERINE MCAULEY, who was born in Dublin county in 1787. While still in the fresh vigor of her young life she inherited a fortune of £30,000, £600 a year in perpetuity, and a valuable estate. All this she devoted to the cause of education and charity. She had no idea of forming a religious institute, but thitherward, none the less, events carried her quietly, guided undoubtedly by the hand of a merciful Providence that loves the poor and the afflicted. It is curious indeed to note the successive steps by which CATHERINE MCAULEY'S original idea of merely personal service for the poor grew into a great and flourishing Order of charity. Unknown to her, the new building in Baggot Street, Dublin, which she intended as a residence for herself and a home for a few distressed women, was so designed that on completion people said: 'Why, 'tis a convent!' Her friends—who took keen offence at her interest in the poor—were less kind: they called it 'that big foolish house' and 'Miss MCAULEY'S folly.' The 'big foolish house' was opened in 1827 and became a happy home for orphans and distressed women. As their numbers grew, pious ladies began to pay daily visits to assist in the work of the institute—to tend the poor women and instruct the orphans. Soon afterwards some of Miss MCAULEY'S most ardent helpers found it convenient to occasionally take a midday meal in the Baggot Street Home. From this to permanent residence was a short, but most important, step. The little knot of zealous ladies soon began to address each other in mere playfulness as 'Sister.' A distinctive dress was speedily adopted. It was approved by ecclesiastical authority in 1828, and in the same year 'Miss MCAULEY'S folly' received the happier title of the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy. In 1830 Miss MCAULEY and two of her companions began their novitiate with the Presentation Nuns. On December 12 of the following year (1831) they were solemnly professed. The foundation of their Order dates from that day, but the Institute had been in constant operation from the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy in 1827. The beautiful title, 'Sisters of Mercy,' was adopted by CATHERINE MCAULEY from that of the religious Order of women founded by St. PETER NOLASCO. It indicated that the works of mercy—both spiritual and corporal—should be the distinctive feature of the work of this new battalion of the Church's grand army of charity. And their rule 'combines,' as the biographer of the foundress states, 'the silence, recollection, and prayer of the Carmelites with the active zeal of the Sisters of Charity.'

The foundress of the new Institute passed away to her reward on November 11, 1841. But she had lived to see her good work spread rapidly in all Ireland. In 1839, two years before her death, it had passed into England. It was introduced into Newfoundland in 1842, into the United States in the following year, into Australia in 1849, into New Zealand in 1850, and into South America in 1856. The orphan, the poor, the sick, the afflicted—in America penitent women also—are the Sisters' special care, and their hearts go out to every form of human suffering and woe. In the days of pestilence and war the Sisters of Mercy have risen naturally and unconsciously to a height of simple heroism that has never been surpassed. There are, for instance, few nobler things in the history of self-sacrifice for others than the story of how the Sisters of Mercy toiled, cleansed, cooked, and performed the most menial services of every kind for the stricken poor and gave their lives for them in the cholera epidemics of 1832 in Ireland, of 1854 and 1867 in Newfoundland, and of 1855 in San Francisco; in the typhus ravages that followed the great Irish famine and swooped down upon Newfoundland in 1847 and Pittsburg in 1848; and in various visitations of small-pox and other malignant and contagious diseases. In at least three great wars—the Crimean, the American Civil War, and the Spanish-