

J. M. J.

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OF THE

VERY REVEREND SUPERIOR-GENERAL

TO THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

NOTRE DAME, Oct. 16, 1876.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

Were it in my power to reply separately to every letter I have received on the occasion of my Patron Saint's Festival, I would cheerfully enter upon the task. But this being out of the question, I must be satisfied, and all my kind correspondents likewise, with a general acknowledgment of the warm and beautiful congratulations so abundantly presented to me since a few days. Such manifestations of filial sentiments never find me indifferent; but it seems to me that I never felt as sensibly affected by the same on any previous similar occasion. Let no one therefore doubt for a moment my heartfelt sense of gratitude for the many letters addressed to me (nearly 500 in number). I may say, I have read attentively and pleasurably every line. May God return a hundredfold to my kind well-wishers all the blessings and good things they have asked for me.

I am particularly pleased and thankful when I see the edifying zeal with which the Association of the Angel Guardians of the Sanctuary has been introduced into our schools in general. I trust every Establishment shall have completed its list and forwarded it to V. Rev. Father Provincial here before the close of this month, which is the Month of the Angels. This will be a sure test of religious dispositions among the heads of our Houses. Yesterday 400 new members were announced from New Brunswick, and 300 from Washington. Let it be remembered that this is our own Association, undoubtedly intended by Divine Providence as a new source of blessings upon each one of our Establishments, and the Congregation at large.

I hope all of us shall bear in mind, or rather carry out with a will, the instructions of His Holiness, communicated from Rome last spring, and fully explained at the Annual Retreat. Even those who have done their duty in imparting religious knowledge to their pupils, will endeavor to do still better, and secure to Religion, in their schools, the place it ought to occupy, as the branch of education paramount to all others.

In connection with the question of a Christian training in our own schools, I must remark, as a fruit of my recent visits to class-rooms in some of our Houses, that sufficient attention is not paid to the exterior behavior and deportment of pupils. They are unnecessarily noisy in their ingress and egress and movements in general, while the largest class can be trained, in one day, to move either in a body or privately, as though they were in church. Then, again, they should be inspected every morning, from head to foot, in ranks and in silence, in order to cultivate in them habits of neatness and personal love of a decent appearance. Their class-rooms should be in the most perfect cleanliness, also floors and desks, benches and walls. Scholars should always leave the school in ranks and in silence, and not disband until they reach the 2d or 3d square or block. The public will soon notice the results of these prescriptions, which can be easily enforced, to the immediate credit of both teachers and pupils.

Again, grade your classes intelligently. Lose not a minute, but try to create a lively activity among all your students. A spirited teacher will bring or draw out a large class in a few months, while a sleepy one will leave it where he found it, at the end of the year. Where there is such life in a class, there is no need of corporal punishment, which always reveals a teacher *incapable or unprepared*.

The period we are now passing through is a trying one: our schools require all the energy we can command, in order to reach an efficiency which alone may justify and keep up the patronage they receive, against temptations continually on the increase. Mark my words, the struggle is terrible; we must win the day, or perish, as Educators. The number of our pupils is barely sufficient to keep us alive. In many things we can hardly compete with the public schools of the land: with their stately buildings, their immense pecuniary means enable them to choose among the best talent; their halls are crowded; every worldly advantage is at their disposal. But they are Godless institutions; there is a fever of success that always proves fatal, wherever God is ignored. In vain will man consume his energy in building up a house which God does not help raising for His own glory. This is their threat, as it is the firm ground of our confidence in ultimate success. We alone can say: "If God is with us, what does it matter who is against us?" But if God is our only hope, we must try fully to deserve His protection. While immorality, the natural offspring of a Godless training, is spreading and daily increasing around us on all sides, we who know better where to look for a cure of so many fearful evils should find our greatest consolation and even our delight in spending ourselves in the glorious task of training up young and innocent souls for Heaven. Let then God's holy remembrance permeate all our efforts and their efforts. Let the Holy Angels be present to their minds, as Protectors, and models of purity, of prompt obedience, of reverence, and love of God. Thus will you establish the reign of Jesus in those stainless hearts, whose Christian morals will soon form a striking contrast with the infidelity of the day and an irrecusable evidence of the superiority of our schools over everything that is now done under the inspiration of the Prince of this world.

E. SORIN, C. S. C.

Superior General.