

J. M. J.

CIRCULAR LETTER NO. 126

OF THE

Very Rev. SUPERIOR GENERAL

OF THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

NOTRE DAME, IND., JAN. 9, 1884.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

Yesterday's mail brought us the dreadful account of the horrible calamity of Saturday night, at Belleville, Ill., which, in a single hour, reduced into ashes the Convent of the Immaculate Conception, a flourishing boarding school kept by the excellent Sisters of Notre Dame (of Milwaukee), with a loss of 27 lives, 5 Sisters, among whom was the Superior herself, and 22 young ladies, from 14 to 18 years of age!!

Who could pause unmoved before this appalling catastrophe, which has cast such an unprecedented gloom over the land, and so cruelly snatched so many precious lives? Oh, let us hasten to pray most fervently for those 27 innocent victims! Who could feel more deeply this lamentable accident than we ourselves, so lately tried in the same fiery crucible? Once more, I must earnestly commend their dear souls and their desolated families to your Holy Sacrifices and Communions.

Such a new warning, and the 12 other fires reported from various parts in the same night, should not pass unheeded, but leave among us a lasting impression, by which we should be continually and forcibly reminded, especially during these dangerous months of winter, of what may happen, any moment, to any one of us, unless we move in constant fear, which, more than anything else, after prayer, is the mother of safety to our best interests and our very lives. Understand me: unless you watch and pray, you may see again another terrifying blaze over your own heads, ruining all around you, and burying yourselves in a blazing grave. "*Vigilate et orate*" impresses the same saving fear upon every youthful mind and heart around you.

Common and serious dangers, more than anything else, draw closer, everywhere, the links of real affection and devotedness. Let us then pray, more fervently than ever, for each other's happiness and preservation from all accidents and misfortunes. Before closing these timely remarks and counsels, I feel once more obliged to thank our dear Family of the Holy Cross for the incessant flow of filial outpourings of attachment, which I did not even suspect when I wrote the Circular of the 22d of December. Had I ever needed a vote of confidence, I certainly have it to my full satisfaction. If the fear of a change has pained your loving hearts, beyond all my anticipations, let the assurance the expression of it has naturally drawn from my own, in return, to fight with you the good fight to the end, prove a new encouragement to us all, and a new source of devotedness to our noble and sacred cause. Now then, more than ever before, let us form a family of devoted, exemplary children, ready to sacrifice the world to God, nature to faith, time to eternity; and for this let all live up to the Rules.

Yours devotedly,

E. SORIN, C. S. C.,
Superior General.

P. S. Since the above lines were written the startling news comes to us of a threatened disaster in our very midst! Last night the novitiate narrowly escaped being burned to ashes. Thank God and our Lady and St. Joseph for their protection! Again, I say, watch more carefully and pray more fervently than ever before.

The privilege offered to the children of our own schools, to obtain, at half price, the precious Journal of our Blessed Mother, is hereby extended to the 15th of Feb., as many have written that they did not receive my former circular in time to do much canvassing. Let all exert themselves to the utmost to obtain as many new readers for the the *Ave Maria* as possible. I want this plan to have a fair trial among ourselves before having it proposed (as we are thinking of doing) to schools in general. If among our own members, who owe so much to the Blessed Virgin, there is lack of zeal in her service, we shall have scant hope of seeing it manifested elsewhere. Let it be well understood that the proposal is *exclusively for the children*.
E. S.