

## CIRCULAR LETTER NO. 8

OF THE

Very Rev. SUPERIOR GENERAL

OF THE

Congregation of the Holy Cross.

NOTRE DAME, AUGUST 30, 1886.

REV. FATHERS AND BELOVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

I yield to entreaties to address you again a few words of advice and encouragement on the momentous occasion of the opening of our schools. Indeed, I am glad to have such an opportunity to declare, honestly and frankly, that if I have consented to submit to the increasing responsibilities of my heavy charge, I have a right to call upon each and all in our dear Family of generous and devoted souls to lighten my burden by their best efforts in the discharge of duty. I look for this with the fullest confidence; and this alone gives me rest of mind and heart. Nay, more: all things considered, I entertain greater hopes of blessings and success for the Congregation than ever before, from the simple fact that our Religious Family never was so well organized. I make no secret of it; I have faith, more than at any previous epoch, in the actual governing element of the Congregation. All that is required for complete success is the good will, the religious will, of every subject. Now, the question is: What House will be blessed above all the rest? What Religious in each House will prove, by devotedness to duty, the chief cause of success, of peace and happiness? Of this I expect to know something for certain by the 20th of December, when every Establishment shall have been duly and scrupulously visited. But if you wish to know in advance what will secure a favorable report of Houses and individuals, here is a list, or programme, of general requirements from which none can pretend to be dispensed and be blessed.

1st. Regularity from morning to night in the performance of duty—in attending exercises and in fulfilling what obedience dictates. Here I mean a thorough Religious, not a secular in a religious garb.

2d. Exemplary piety in the church, in the class-room, in every place to which obedience calls—*pietas ad omnia utilis est*—this will show a Religious edifying, modest, zealous, visibly happy.

3d. Religious instruction to be considered, everywhere and at all times, the first object of our schools and teachers. We are sent to make Christian scholars, to cultivate hearts even more than brains.

4th. Order, discipline, silence,—the signal directing every movement in the class-room.

5th. No corporal punishment of any kind whatsoever (which no teacher can use any more).

6th. To *teach reading*. I say *reading*; it is the first element, and the one most ignored. It is acknowledged that among ordinary teachers *very few* know how to read.

7th. Polite, well-trained, refined teachers very soon make the happiest impressions upon their pupils. From such models, whom they cannot but admire, they readily learn how to move, how to stand, how to bow; and thus, even rough young beings often become striking examples of good manners and excellent habits.

If every one *resolves with a will* to carry out the above few points, I shall certainly realize my cheering hopes of a larger harvest of good than ever for the Congregation. Let Obedience, Poverty and Chastity remind us all of the sacred obligations we have contracted, and of the heavenly blessings they will ever draw from above, if we are faithful to our vows. God will bless us as we deserve. But to secure all we need, we must sacrifice nature and live by faith—"without which it is impossible to please God."

This is no new doctrine; and yet is it not sometimes forgotten? Let us all try to begin a new life, on the approach of our holy Mother's Nativity; let us place ourselves and those precious young souls entrusted to our care under her special patronage, more earnestly, more unreservedly than we ever did before. The school of experience is the perfecting school, by excellence, for superior minds and ambitious souls. We have all, or nearly all, attended this incomparable school. It has clearly revealed all our deficiencies. Shall we not profit by its lessons? A new scholastic year is opening; it may be for some the very last in their career of teaching; it should, by all means, be made the richest of all, at least in merits. Let it be offered to the Blessed Virgin, humbly, wholly and lovingly, every day, from the beginning to the end. She will accept it and bless it, and the result will be above all human calculations.

E. SORIN, C. S. C.,

Superior General.