

473 ⁴⁷⁷ Chapter (565)

(There are two
branches of the Sisters
of the Holy Cross, the
other branch of the
Sisters of the Holy Cross)

The Sisters of the Holy Cross

(473 to 512 to fall out?)

Their response to the call of suffering humanity -
- Their devotion, their services and their sacrifices -
- Governor Morton of Indiana gratefully accepts
the offer of the Sisters' services - The Sisters,
under charge of Mother Mary Angela in
charge of the hospitals at Paducah -
Their zeal not abated by their hardships and
sufferings - Scenes and sufferings in the
hospitals - The Sisters trials and triumphs -
How they conquered prejudices by meekness,
Charity and good works - Touching incidents -
Mother Angela at Marion City -

Thank the good and charitable works performed
by the Sisters of the various orders during
this war, in their attendance ^{on} the sick
and wounded, though they have made a
grateful impression in the public mind
and have done much to remove groundless prejudices
against both their order and holy religion,
still owing to the interesting disposition of the
Sisters they have not been given due publicity.

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while trifling, but more ostentatious services, have been made the themes of poets and historians. Meek, humble and retiring, laboring alone for the ^{glory} service of God, and expecting no earthly reward for their services, it is no wonder that they shrank from parading their Christian labors and good works before the eyes of the world.

On this account we ^{have} had much difficulty in collecting the materials, relative to the Sisters, for our work. Through the aid and influence of kind friends we have succeeded in rescuing from ^{oblivion} obscurity enough regarding their gentle ministrations to the sick and wounded in the hospitals, and of that sweetness and gentle meekness, which conquered prejudice and error, to make our work not only interesting, but also to leave in history a record, that will for him as a theme and a upbraiding to the Maligners of the pious Sisters and their holy Religion. We know that it is a very different thing to perform good and charitable works and quite another to give to posterity an accurate and faithfully written account of them.

The very qualities of mind and heart which enters into the life of a religious make the most sublime acts of heroism, self denial and charity, appear to her as simple acts of duty. She regards not what the world says about her; if she is but conscious that she has fulfilled her mission and done the work allotted to her by her divine Master she is fully satisfied. She counts not the ~~approx~~ vain approbations of mortals, if conscious that she has done her duty she finds her reward in that inward peace and grace which are the fruits of good and pure actions.

~~Among the many religious houses whose members went forth to encounter hardships dangers privations and diseases in order to alleviate suffering humanity that order of Holy Cross, Indiana was not the least conspicuous.~~

Of these humble sisters but faithful soldiers of the Cross, it might be justly said in the words of Gerald Griffin.

"Unbinking where pestilence scatters his breath,
Like an angel she moves, 'mid the vapors of death,
Where rings the loud musket, and flashes the sword,
Unfearing she walks, for she follows the Lord.

How sweetly she bends o'er each plague-tainted face
With looks that are lighted with holier grace.
How kindly she dresses each suffering limb,
For she sees in the wounded the image of Him."

Among the numerous religious houses, whose members went freely forth to encounter ~~to~~ hardships, dangers, privations and disease in order to alleviate the sufferings of their fellow creatures, the house of Holy Cross, ~~and~~ Notre Dame, Indiana, stands prominent for the number of sisters it is sent to attend the sick and wounded.

In the early part of the war, no fact at its backing out, the Ecclesiastical Superior of the Mother house of St. Mary, Notre Dame, namely, the very Rev. Father Sorin, ^{under his charge} offered the services of the Sisters, to Governor Morton as nurses in the hospitals which offer was gladly accepted.

In October 1861 the three Military Hospitals of St. Raduach, Kentucky, were in charge of a corps of Sisters under Mother Mary of St. Angela. When they took charge of these hospitals the patients were suffering from long dysentery and measles which diseases were much accelerated by the lack of proper attendance and nourishment.

The Sisters soon effected a total change for the better and the disease rapidly declined after they had taken charge of the hospitals. So great were the labors of the Sisters that two of them died from disease brought on by exposure and fatigue, while several of them had to return to St. Mary in broken health; but their places were soon filled by fresh volunteers, who immediately filled up the depleted ranks; and no less than

Seventy five Sisters of Holy Cross were actively engaged during the war as nurses in the Military hospitals of Cairo, Mound City, Louisville and in the naval hospitals.

In November 1861 Mother Angela, at the request of the Medical Director of General Grant's Army, sent some Sisters to Mound City to attend to the wounded who had been carried there from the battle field of Belmont. The hospitals were a lot of improvised huts and store rooms, in which no fewer than seven hundred wounded soldiers were crowded, without beds or covering. Their wounds too, had become from their long exposure on the battle field, corrupted and full of creeping maggots, so that the Sisters had an unpleasant task to perform to clean and wash them.

The hospital was in charge of Dr. E. C. Franklin, who, with the aid of the Sisters, soon had all their wounds dressed and the poor fellows made as comfortable as circumstances would permit.

This was made a general hospital for the wounded from other the surrounding camps, so the Rev. Mother had to telegraph to St. Marys for eighteen more Sisters. The men too were poorly supplied with nourishing food, which was necessary to strengthen them, but through the exertions of the Sisters supplies soon came in, and to the honor of William H. Osborn Esq., President of the Illinois Central he it said that he authorized Rev. Mother Angela to draw upon him for whatever she needed, which ~~he~~ ^{he} generously the liberally used for the benefit of the sick and wounded soldiers.

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Nation

and the thanks of the should be tendered
to that noble benevolent ^{well as to} ~~other~~
~~gentlemanly officers of the~~ ^{the} ~~army~~, During the
month of December 1861 the numbers of the sick and
wounded in the Forward City and Larro hospitals
were so great that more Sisters had to be taken
from the sent for to the hospital at Paducah
Good old sister M. De la P. ^{one of the} ~~one of~~ most
efficient nurses was among those, called on &
As she was on the steamboat about to leave
for her destination some of the ^{Protestant} army chaplains
seeing her, came forward to express their regret
at her departure and to thank her for the ^{giving} ~~giving~~
care she had bestowed upon the sick, "I'm at a
loss" said one of the chaplains addressing his companion
to know where this good old sister ever took any
rest. I have gone to the hospital at daybreak
to look to some of ^{our} sick boys and there was ^{this} sister
engaged in her work of mercy I have been there
at noon and she was still at her post, and
I have some times gone late at night & found
her there still, ^{concerning} the last moments of
some dying soldier, "It is a mystery," he continued
"how these Sisters can stand at their post without
ever giving up" Addressing Sister P. he said
"How do you account for it?" But she simply
smiled and pointed to the beads hanging at her side

This pantomime answer only seemed to confuse him
 and ~~the~~ Sister Angel Mary of St. Angelo, noticing his
 mystified look said to Mother ^{Angela} ~~Mary~~ "I not speak
 good English, please you tell the gentleman" Sister
 means" said Mother ^{Maria} in her office of interpreter.
 That the Sisters our strength is sustained and
 even increased in the daily discharge of hospital labors
 by our frequent meditations on the life and sufferings
 of our Lord; When our minds dwell upon the love
 He manifested for us in His Sacred Humanity
 it is the most natural thing in the world for us
 to find strength and joy in relieving for His sake
 the sufferings of some of those for whom he died. Now
 the beads we carry at our side are to us replete with
 an eloquence beyond the power of human words,
 being an epitome of our Lord's life in his Sacred
 humanity. From the moment that the archangel declared
 to the Immaculate Virgin of Judea that she should
 be the Mother of God, to the morning of His glorious
 resurrection and ascension, then in as brief but
 forcible and touching a manner as possible Mother
~~Mary of St. Angelo~~ could command ^{Angela} ~~the~~ passed
 before him the mysteries attached to the different decades
 of ^{said she} "You can understand what Sister P. means which
 is that when worn out with fatigue she passes a
 decade through her fingers, meditates upon the agony
 in the garden, or the painful fall in the streets of

Jerusalem, ^{she feels} ~~finds~~ a new strength & a new
 courage ~~to perform her duties~~ ^{to perform her duties}, When the details of
 the sick bed are calculated to disgust us, our
 heads help us to recall the bitter portion of vinegar
 and gall (the draught for that poor sufferer, as
 well as for us), When our down heads ~~that with~~
 the weariness and the excitement attending such
 terrible scenes, the mere touch of our heads, reminds
 us of the agony endured by the crowning with
 sharp thorns, ~~and this sense in the reminder does~~
 a great deal towards soothing our own pain
 or making us indifferent to it. The chaplain
 listened attentively and then exclaimed "Well how"
 that is indeed Christianity, I used to think the
 Papists heads were great humbug, now I'll
 always regard them with respect, They remind
 me of what I myself often do, When I am at home
 and am going down ^{the} street my wife tells me
 to bring something for the family, Although I think
 a great deal of what she says, yet to keep
 it in mind, in the midst of other affairs that may
 attract my attention, I always tie a cotton string
 around my finger; Yes," he continued "I am convinced
 that there is a good deal of Christianity in those
 heads," As the boat was about The chaplain
 then left and the boat started with its ~~freight~~
~~freight~~ freight, the sisters & the sisters on their way
 to their further work of mercy.

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When the news ~~came~~ of the battle of Fort Donelson
 arrived at the Union City hospital, all the sick
 who could be removed from the latter place, were
 transferred to St Louis ~~in~~ in order to make room
 for those wounded in the late bloody ~~struggle~~ ^{battle}. Through-
 out the whole day and late at night the good
 angelic nurses were busy for their fresh work
 of mercy, which was to commence ~~it~~ again that
 night. After midnight several boats came in,
 literally packed with cargoes of wounded men.
 After the sufferers were placed in the hospitals one
 of the wards in particular presented ~~more~~ a scene
 more than usually appalling. It was filled by the
 wounded of a certain command that had been placed
 in ambush during ~~the~~ a part of the battle with
 instructions to lie flat on the ground until the ~~need~~ ^{convenient} ~~for~~ ^{came} ~~the~~ ^{order} ~~to rise~~ ^{to rise}.
 The order ^{to rise} unfortunately was given too soon, and
 as the men raised their heads they received ~~the~~ a volley
 which almost placed the whole of them hors de
 combat. The wounds being all received in the
 head face & neck the sufferings of these men
 were dreadful, some had to endure additionally
 the pangs of ^{not being able to swallow} ~~starvation~~ ^{one of them} while others frantically pulled
 the tongues from their mouths and threw them on
 the ground. The good sisters went to work -
 with a will, & by their kind attention the sufferers
 The good sisters went to work with their usual

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8 1/2) attention and alacrity and from their humane
treatment of the sufferers, the gratitude of
the latter knew no bounds

The very name of "Sisters" rendered the services of ^{the} Angelic
nurses, the more welcome to the sick, for the latter
would say "When we call you sisters we feel as if we could
ask you for anything we need without fearing that
you will be impatient or tired of us," and in writing
to their friends the whole of ^{their} ~~the~~ ^{trifles and trifles} ~~and trifles~~ ^{and trifles}
would be placed in the Sisters' trustworthy
keeping. Letters from friends of ~~the dying~~ ^{the dead} would
be also received as well as relations by the
Sisters inquiring for information concerning the
last sickness, last words, and dying disposi-
tions of the departed, and it was invariably
aching to ~~read their expressions of grief for the~~ ^{read their expressions of grief for the} ~~beloved~~
dead ^{as well as} their gratitude for the services by the
rendered ~~to them~~ ^{to them} in their ~~last~~ ^{last} hours
~~of the dear departed ones.~~ Throughout the hospital
the Sisters ^{were} ~~were~~ ^{everywhere} ~~everywhere~~ ^{greeted} "God bless you ladies!"
"O Sisters, what good you ^{are} doing here!" "How happy we are
to see you here among our poor fellows" ^{would be} ~~were~~ the exclamations
of the Officers & Surgeons while the poor patients would say
"I don't know what we, boys, would do if it were not for the
Sisters!" The Protestant Ministers ^{expressed} ~~expressed~~ ^{always} a hearty good
will towards them, and the soldiers engaged in the different
departments, always showed them great respect and uni-
formly felt that the Sisters presence was necessary
if only to keep the soldiers to their strict line of duty
in attending to the interests of the sick. In the midst
of all their sufferings the wounded exhibited the noblest
traits of patience and resignation

attention & alacrity & from their warm and kind
 treatment of the sufferers the gratitude of the latter.
 There were no wounds in the midst of all these sufferings
 * they ~~exhibited~~ ^{suggested} the ~~brightest~~ ^{most} features of humanity. The
 sentiments of courage which had inspired them
 upon the battle field was in beautiful ~~and~~ ^{outward} contrast
 * to their meekness & nobleness in the hospital.
 Their preparation for death could not have been
 made with better dispositions, ^{as they were dying at home} often and often
 would a soldier say to a sister while ministering
 to his physical sufferings "sister I know I must
 die then do tell us what is necessary to believe, & how
 do, by way of preparation, for I am sure what
 you tell us must be true," Then again with all
 of childhood's earnestness and childhood's simplicity
 they would emphatically ~~express~~ ^{say} "Teach us what to
 believe and we will believe". And as such scenes
 were almost universal throughout the hospitals
 few very few, breathed their last without a
 spirit of lively faith & firm hope and sincere
 contrition. In less than eleven months ^{some} full ^{of} ~~full~~
 hundreds of those who died were baptized and
 well prepared for death, and this preparation for a
 happy death continued through the whole
 course of the war, in those hospitals of which
 which the sisters had charge,
 There were full fifteen hundred wounded

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under the charge of the Sisters at Mount Leidy
 Hospital alone, and although their labors
 were ~~unending~~ ^{unceasing} still they never wearied
 in doing good. In addition to the ~~many~~
~~nursing and caring for~~ ^{range caring for} the physical and attending
 other spiritual welfare of the soldiers the Sisters
 had another task devolved upon them, which
 was as praiseworthy and perhaps as laborious
 as either of the ^{other} two; many and many an
 affectionate brother a loving son and faithful
 husband wished to transmit a note to the loved
 ones at home, bidding a last adieu in this
 land of misery and toil, ~~It was here~~ ^{It has here} again
 that the good Sisters' kindness struck deep
 into the gratitude of the wounded Soldiers, ^{heart}
 Several of the most rapid writers were
 appointed to pass from one ward into another
 making it their special charge to go
 to those in whom the shadows of death
 were falling fastest, giving to them all the
 consolations which that Supreme hour
 required, or at least all in their power
 to bestow, consoling alike the Federal and
 Confederate, by writing to their loved ones
 far away in the north or South, their
 last, dying words, their farewell to parents
 wives and children; and when the agony was

over and the face of the dead soldier settled ^{for} ~~for~~ the purpose of death, before the camp blanket was drawn over it. the Sister in attendance took care to enclose in the letter a lock of ~~the~~ ^{his} hair as a last memorial of one so dear, and who would be deeply mourned by the loved ones at home. The lock was covered by a scissors which always hung at her side with her "Seven dollar heads", on which heads a few moments previously her hand lingered in his call through his passage across the cold valley of death.

Three days after the battle of Pittsburg Landing ~~there was an additional number of~~ ^{to the number} ~~of~~ ^{of} two thousand wounded ~~to the amount~~ ^{to the number} of two thousand were brought to Meade City Hospital. At the same time several Eastern surgeons arrived to assist the regular corps of men in charge. Among these was a young physician - Dr. M., who attracted attention by his great devotedness to the sufferers confided to his care. After a few weeks he was dismissed from his wards and was supposed to have been removed to another post. One afternoon however an attendant informed the ^{other} ~~super~~ ^{superior} that Dr. M. was quite sick and wished to see her. She went immediately to the suite of rooms assigned to the surgeons ~~where~~

where she found him in bed and surrounded by several of his brother physicians. On beholding her he exclaimed in an excited voice "Oh Mother, how glad I am to see you, I am going to die, tell me do you think I shall be saved?" "Of course you will Mr. -" soothingly replied ~~one~~ ^{me} of the physicians. "Ah Doctor" said the sick man, "I did not ask you that question; keep to your pill shops there you are at home, but I fear you know very little about the next world." Judging from his manner that he was under the excitement of fever and not wishing to make the subject of religion a matter of ~~contempt~~ comment for those present, the sister quietly endeavored to soothe him, and as she left the room ^{she} called aside the surgeon-in-chief to ask if Dr. M. was really in danger. He replied that it was impossible for him to live; that he had fallen a victim to his devotedness to others. On hearing this all the sisters in the hospital assembled in their little chapel in presence of the blessed sacrament, and offered up their prayers with the greatest fervor for ~~their~~ ^{his} conversion. At every leisure moment each sister's hands passed through her hands while her ^{heart} invoked the Mother of Mercy to bless him at the hour of death. In the meantime the ~~father~~ ^{mother} superior returned to his bed side when he again exclaimed, Sister I have never

been baptized, my Parents are both Unitarians. I have never really thought of the next world, but I came to the West full of high ambitious dreams of winning fame and renown in the surgical ranks. The devotedness of the Sisters to the suffering and the dying attracted my attention from the very first, and now when I am dying myself, I turn to you for "some consolation." As he wished to see her then listened with the docility of a child to her instructions, and whenever she left the room, he would say to the other sister in attendance "Sister continue to repeat those little prayers, so that they will not pass from my mind." There being no priest in the village a letter was written for the one at Leeds, but did not reach him in time; and as the clammy hand of death was settling on the brow of the sick man, the same sister, who had instructed him, then baptized him. After death the ~~scars~~ expression of countenance of the young dead Physician bore a beautiful and heavenly expression. The And all who saw him, were deeply affected by ^{and the} ~~that~~ the Sisters whispered low to each ^{other} ~~each~~ that now could he look otherwise, when the Blessed Mother Virgin Mary heard their requests and obtained for him the Grace of a happy death.!"

Among the patients in the hospital at Monmouth was young M. who had been a great

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Favorite was had been brought up the river with some twenty or thirty of his regiment, all sick with typhoid fever. From the moment of their arrival it was easy to see what a general favorite he was in his company, for all his comrades appeared as much concerned in his recovery as they ~~would~~ ^{were} in their own. The soldiers who had been detailed from their regiment to assist in nursing them were so attentive to W- that a stranger would suppose him to be a relation to all of them, but in spite of all the kindness and attention shown to him, he grew weaker and weaker every day. Seeing this, the sister in attendance, (as usual when any of the patients would be in danger) slipped a medal under his pillow and at evening prayer heads were laid in common for his conversion. W- had never been baptized ^{and} when the sisters spoke to him of his danger and the value of his immortal soul, he listened with the docility of a child who had never wilfully done wrong, and with an earnestness that delighted and edified all who heard him, he would frequently say, "Sisters, I want to believe just as you do, I know you will teach me what is right, only tell me what I must believe and what I must do to be saved, and I will gladly believe and do it." ~~As if inspired nothing seemed~~

or more gradually
 more easy to him than to love the Blessed Virgin Mary
 & ~~there was~~ ^{being} no priest near, the Sisters had not only
 to instruct him but to baptize him. The night of
 this death was ~~touching~~ ^{afflicting} in the extreme, ~~at the earnest~~
~~request of~~ At his earnest request two of the Sisters
 said the prayers for the dying while all his com-
 panions in arms, who were able to leave their beds,
 were either kneeling or standing around him. Those
 who could not rise were propped up to take a
 last look at their beloved companion, who was
 partially supported in the arms of two soldiers
 so that he would be seen by all. So long as his
 strength lasted he joined in the prayers, and he
 seemed to have ~~the more~~ ^{in the occasion} than ordinary ^{strength} at that
 Supreme hour, for he exhorted his companions to
 embrace the true faith and thereby find in life
 and in death the ~~thorough~~ consolation he then
 felt. He died whispering the names of Jesus and
 Mary; and his death touched the hearts
 of many among his comrades, leading them to think
 seriously and effectually of their own eternal ^{salvation} interests.
 In addition to the labors which the good
 Sisters had to undergo in the sick wards
 of the hospital their ~~labors~~ ^{duties} in the kitchen
 attached thereto ~~were almost~~ ^{to some persons} ~~unwearied~~ ^{as} ~~increditable~~
 The following graphic account given by
 Dr. C. L. Rogers one of the gentlemen sent
 from Chicago to inquire into the hospital will perhaps be
 read with interest,

24) Dr. E. C. Rogers, who was sent down from Chicago to inspect the hospital complained of the want of accommodation for washing provided for by the Sisters. When he asked how they could keep up such

implements the Lady Superior exclaimed laughingly "If you find fault with our cooking stove Doctor what will you say to our washing machines?" and held up her little fists with their ten digits ~~now with their~~ ^{from} work at the soldiers wash tubs. This was too much for civilized humanity. We could only beat a retreat, with a tearful assurance to the laughing sisters, that we would never rest until we knew they were provided with every thing necessary for carrying forward their sublime work of charity and self denial." To some extent the Doctor's promise ~~was made good.~~

In April 1862 the Mississippi ^{& Ohio rivers} had a grand overflow and inundated city as well as other places ~~was~~ affected by the swell, - even the hospital came in for its share of the deluge. After several days watching with anxiety from the Sisters and physicians and employees of the the water began to ooze through the floors. This caused great inconvenience and occasioned many comical expressions of reaction. The officials exclaiming that they were writing with their feet in their desks and their ~~east~~ tails in the water, while the nurses would declare that they were wading to the dining rooms and rowing themselves through the kitchen. The good Dr. ^{Franklin}

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, whose energy always exceeded his patience, was beset on all sides with difficulties and questions, & one day was so annoyed that he declared he could not keep our institution under water unless he was himself a fish and his patientsysters I don't mind," said he, "but these people - why they must think I can turn back the Ohio - Doctors, Stewards, clerks, cooks, ward masters, nurses, and washerwomen beset me on every side," Brother Angelo at once tried to pacify him, ~~the reminding~~ ^{by} reminding him how necessary it was for one of his energy and experience to have command during this trying and perplexing affair event, but the good Doctor went off reiterating his resolution of giving up his commission, if the Ohio did not back down first. On Low Sunday the water being an inch above the level of the first floor, it was decided that the sick should be removed to St. Louis. Accordingly Dr. Thomas was appointed officer of the day to superintend the landing of the hospital boat and the transfer of the wounded men. It was a sad sight to see the poor ^{yellow} ~~wounded~~ men who though so very weak, and macked with pains, ~~having~~ ^{had} to be carried on stretchers down the stairs and then lifted from into the boat and thence again to the steamer, while others were lurching on crutches or supported by attendants as they rolled towards the boats.