CONGREGATION OF OUR LADY OF MERCY

IN

NEW ZEALAND

HISTORY THESIS H.A. 1939.

Codeword: Aphis.

By Beatrice Gaughan

Convent

1937

Tmaru

B. Goughan
Preface

Sisters of Mercy in our different dioceses have often expressed regret that, so far, no one has written a historical sketch of the Order of Mercy in New Zealand. Time is steadily stealing from our midst those who were privileged to enjoy personal acquaintance with the first religious women - the Auckland Sisters of Mercy of 1850 - to come to this country. So, while there yet remain with us, five of the original band who in 1873 founded the first Convent of Mercy in the South Island, I have attempted to break the ice, however feebly, and thus free the current for more competent explorers.

Owing to the lack of a central authority for the Order, the collecting of sources and other data has entailed much more research than one might infer from the size of the work. A considerable amount of detail was necessary but I have endeavoured to so use it as not to lose sight of the vivifying spirit of mercy, which embraces even the least works of the Order.

For prompt and generous response to many appeals and for loans of useful materials I owe abundant thanks to Mrs. E.R. Goulter, Fairlie; Miss Roma Connor, M.A., Auckland; Rev. Father Fogarty, Geraldine; Rev. K.I. MacRath, S.H., Editor, Marist Messenger, Wellington; Rev. Brother Marcellinus, Timaru; Mr. Alan R. Carter, Editor, New Zealand Tablet, Dunedin; Sergeant J. Cleary, Ashburton; Sergeant Devlin, Timaru and to the following - named members of the Order of Mercy - Mother H. Veronica, Limerick; M.M. Benignus, Auckland; M.M. Frances, Wellington; M.M. Claude, Westport; S.M. Bersmans, Greymouth; M.M. Claver, Hokitika; M.M. Aloysius, Lyttelton; Rev. Mother M. de Sales and M.M. Benignus, Timaru; M.M. Ignatius and S.M. St. John, Dunedin.

"Aphis"

Convent of Mercy, Timaru, 1939.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

1. PREFACE.
4. BIBLIOGRAPHY.

7. CHAPTER 1. ORIGIN AND SPIRIT OF THE ORDER OF MERCY.

14. CHAPTER 11. THE COMING AND EARLY ACTIVITIES OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY.

27. CHAPTER 111. MOTHER CECILIA MAKER: AUCKLAND FOUNDATIONS.

St. Mary's, Ponsonby, 1850; St. Patrick's, Auckland, 1850; St. John's, Parnell, 1862; St. Joseph's, Onehunga, 1864; St. Cecilia's, Otahuhu, 1866; St. Mary's, Coromandel, 1882; St. Joseph's Orphanage, Takapuna, 1894; St. Leo's, Devonport, 1896; St. Catherine's, Waihi, 1902; Te Aroha, Our Lady of Lourdes, 1903; Holy Cross, Epsom, 1921; Mt. Carmel, Milford, 1922; St. Eиде's Avondale, 1923; Star of the Sea Orphanage, Howick, 1925; Monte Cecilia College, Hillsborough Rd., Onehunga, 1926; St. Mary's, Pawarenga, 1927; Holy Cross, Henderson, 1932; Mater Misericordiae Hospital, 1900.

39. CHAPTER IV. WELLINGTON ARCHDIOCESE.

Guildford Terrace, Thorndon, 1851; St. Joseph's, Upper Hutt, 1852; St. Philomena's, 1873; Blenheim, 1885; Newton, 1890; Sea-toun, 1909; Kilbirnie, 1912; Picton, 1914; Nai Nai: the Beauti..ul, 1916 - '17; Hatai and Holy Cross. 1930; Other Foundations, 1936; An Amalgamation - Reefton, 1881, Westport, 1894.

54. CHAPTER V. HOKITIKA: FOUNDATIONS FOR SOUTH ISLAND.

"All Saints," Greymouth, 1882; St. Joseph's, Lyttelton, 1890; St. Mary's Christchurch, 1894; "Villa Maria," Riccarton, 1918; Loreto College, 1929; Convent of Mercy, Timaru, 1936.
CHAPTER V1. DUNEDIN DIOCESE.
Gore, 1897; St. Philomena's College 1897-1904; Mosgiel, 1898; St. Vincent's Orphanage, Winton, 1898; Wrey's Bush, 1899; Alexandra, 1912; Riverton, 1913; Nightcaps, 1916; Mornington, 1919; Wavelley Boys' Orphanage, 1920; Mater Misericordiae Hospital 1936.

CHAPTER V11. CONCLUSION.
### BIBLIOGRAPHY.

1. **PUBLICATIONS.**

1. **RELIGIOUS WORKS CONSULTED.**

Cardinal Patrick Francis Moran: History of the Catholic Church in Australasia. (Oceanic Publishing Company, Sydney 1895.)


M.C. Thither: Thesis - Roman Catholic Educational Activity in the Province of Otago, N.Z. (Canterbury College 1934.)

2. **NON-RELIGIOUS WORKS CONSULTED.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Publisher and Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cyclopedia of New Zealand.</strong></td>
<td>Timaru Public Library,</td>
<td>Vol. 1. Wellington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vol. 11. Auckland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vol. 111.Canterbury. (1903)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vol. V. Nelson, Marlborough, and Westland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rusden:</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;History of N.Z.,&quot; Vol. 11. (Melville, Mullen and Slade, Melbourne, 1882.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hight and Bamford:</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;The Constitutional History and Law of New Zealand.&quot; (Whitcombe &amp; Tombs, Ch.Ch. 1914.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shrimpton and Mulgan: "Maori and Pakeha." (Whitcombe & Tombs, Christchurch, 1921.)

Scholefield: "New Zealand Affairs." (L.H. Isitt, Christchurch, 1929.)


3. OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS.

Australian Catholic Directory, 1938.

Year Book by Marist Fathers, 1927 and 1928. New Zealand and Australia.

The New Zealand Police Gazette, 16th June, 1897.

4. NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS.

New Zealand Tablet. (Dunedin.) 23rd February 1938.
30th March 1938.
23rd November 1938.
30th November 1938.

Zealandia. (Auckland.) 18th November 1837.
6th March 1938.
12th March 1938.
28th July 1938.
20th October 1938.
8th December 1938.
1st December 1931.
1st September 1934.
1st October 1934.
1st November 1934.
Centennial Number, March 1938.

Marist Messenger. (Wellington.) 11th December 1931.
3rd December 1937.

Westport News. 2nd September 1938.

The Universe. (London.) 14th December 1931.

English Catholic Times. (London.) 11th December 1937.

The Catholic Press. (Australia.) 3rd December 1931.

5. PHANTHELOTs.

Bishop Cleary: "Seventy Fifth Anniversary of the landing in New Zealand of the Sisters of Mercy (1850 - 1925.) (Mercy Convent Archives, Auckland.)


Rev. J. Ryan S.J. M.A. Mother Catherine McAuley - An Appreciation (Limerick 1938) (Convent Library, Timaru.)

Teachr's Bulletin: Summary of History of Catholic Church in New Zealand (1828 - 1936.) (Ers. Goulter, Fairlie.)

Mr. Paul Kavanagh "The Sisters of Mercy" in New Zealand. Catholic Schools' Journal, September, 1932. (Convent Library Timaru.)

11. UNPUBLISHED SOURCES.

1. Annals.

Annals of the Lyttelton Convent: (Convent of Mercy, Lyttelton).

Annals of the Hokitika Convent: (Convent of Mercy, Hokitika).

2. Personal Interviews.

I have been able to check up on much material by discussing doubtful points with five pioneers who, though they have passed beyond the allotted three-score- and-ten are still quite clear on the events and life of sixty years ago, though not always so clear as to more modern events. Sisters, too, who have lived with the first Auckland and Wellington Sisters, have been kind in furnishing details.
CHAPTER I.

Origin and Spirit of the Order of Mercy.

The Order of Mercy sprang into being as an outcome of the zeal and charity of a beautiful, noble-hearted Irish heiress, Catherine McAuley, who was born in Co. Dublin, in 1787. (1) Although the second half of the 18th century was a "critical period for adherents of the old faith" in Ireland, yet Catherine's father, a devout Catholic, enjoyed all the privileges of polite society without any apparent injury to his Catholic principles. In those penal days when Catholicity was a crime and all things Catholic were "hidden away as in the days of the Catacombs," Catherine's father used to assemble at his own home on Sundays and holidays the poor of the district to instruct them in the truths of their religion. His lessons were to bear fruit in the life of his young daughter who never forgot them.

When Catherine, who was the eldest of three children was but seven years old, she lost her father; and her gay young mother seeing that to adhere to the Catholic faith meant to belong to (2) a "poor, despised, impotent, ragged and pitiful community," willingly accepted the Protestantism of her friends, with its monopoly of wealth, power,
prestige and learning. She died when Catherine was eleven and thenceforth the three orphans were brought up by Protestant friends who could never persuade Catherine to adopt their religion.

(1) When sixteen years old, Catherine was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Callaghan, lately returned from abroad, who were old Protestant friends of the McAuley family.

Her new guardians idolised Catherine but were inflexible on one point—that she should not profess the Catholic religion. Yet so deeply did she revere her father's memory that she offered to relinquish all, rather than embrace any religion but his, and this, even though she was yet ignorant of Catholic teaching and was denied any association with it. However, the strength of her convictions eventually secured her objective and she not only resumed the open practice of her religion, but gained a victory over the prejudice of years by winning her guardians themselves to embrace the Catholic religion.

Mr. Callaghan who survived his wife by two years died in 1822, leaving Catherine his sole heiress. (2) She was now mistress of his stately residence "Coolock House with its plate, carriages and furniture, and income of £600 a year and a sum of £30,000 in the Bank of Ireland." Already

2. Article in "Zealandia" (Mrs. Goulter) Auckland Nov. 25th, 1937
her good father's example had borne fruit and we find her, during leisure hours, distributing food and clothing to the poor, and visiting and instructing the sick of her neighbourhood. So when she came into possession of this fortune she decided to devote her life to the succour of the poor, the sick, and the ignorant. (1). For their benefit she sacrificed all; "her time, which ladies of her class were accustomed to waste in pleasant distractions; her energy, which in those days of cheap labour she would never have been called upon to expend;" and her fortune, which could give her a life of affluence and even of splendour.

Almost immediately after inheriting her fortune, she gathered about her other, noble-minded ladies whom she inspired with like, noble ideals and (2) on September 24th, 1824, there was laid the foundation stones in Baggot Street, Dublin, of her first institution for destitute women and orphans, as well as of a school for poor children. At this stage she had no idea of forming a religious order, but, with her "practical capacity as an administrator," she (3) saw that by forming themselves into a religious congregation the good done by herself and her colleagues could be continued indefinitely in the future by those who would follow in her footsteps. (4) Hence after receiving

1. M.C. McAuley - An Appreciation - (Rev. S. Ryan S.J.)
from Pope Pius V111 a Rescript of Indulgences dated May 23rd, 1830, Catherine and two companions began a novitiate on September 8th, 1830, under the Presentation Sisters at Georges Hill, Dublin. (1) Here on December 12th, 1831, they took their vows as the first Sisters of Mercy, Sister M. Catherine being appointed first Superior. Almost immediately their zeal and charity were severely tested; for, in 1832, cholera stalked the streets of Dublin and the Archbishop appealed to the Sisters on behalf of his suffering flock. (2) In answer to his appeal the Sisters, we are told, "knelt down to receive his blessing and then rose up and made the cholera hospital their home." During the ten short years of her religious life Mother McAuley founded convents throughout Ireland and opened, in England, the first convent since the religious revolt of the sixteenth century. Lady Barbara Eyre, daughter of the Earl of Newbury, was the first to receive the habit. Of the progress made by the Order we have the following from Mother McAuley's own pen —-

(3) "We are now (1839) above a hundred and desire to join us seems rather on the increase. Though it was thought foundations would retard it, the case appears to be otherwise."

It was while engaged on the Birmingham foundation September

1. Ibid. Vol. 1. P. 43.
1841, that Mother McAuley's failing health disclosed alarming symptoms. She died at Baggot Street on November 11th that year.

Though teaching is the chief work of the Order of Mercy, yet, when opportunity calls, the Sisters pass from class-room to hospital or sick-bed and, if need be, even to the battlefield. In 1854-6, in 1861, and again in 1899, the Sisters of Mercy by their devoted service to the sick and wounded soldiers won the praise and esteem of all creeds.

(1) On Friday, October 27, 1854 the first of several bands of Sisters of Mercy embarked on the "Vectis" bound for the East. With Florence Nightingale and Miss Stanley they showed themselves indefatigable in their efforts to soothe the awful sufferings of the plague-stricken and the wounded, on battlefield and in hospital, at Balaclava, Scutari, and Inkermann. (2) Two of the Sisters, victims of cholera and typhus respectively, are buried on the bleak heights of Balaclava. Again, in the records of the American Civil War, we read of the devotion of the Sisters to the stricken soldiers of their adopted country. (3) In 1900 we find Queen Victoria giving a very cordial reception to the Sisters of Mercy who had worked so heroically during

2. Ibid. pp. 197-198.
3. Supplement to N.Z. Catholic Schools Journal, September 1932 (Auckland.)
the siege of Mefeking. The Annals tell that while expressing her gratitude for their kindness to the soldiers, her Majesty pinned the Royal Red Cross on their guimps.

As Mother McAuley had foreseen, the good work she began continued after her death to make rapid progress so that within a hundred years of its foundation the Order of Mercy had spread throughout the English-speaking world.

At St. Johns, Newfoundland the first house of the Order was opened in the Western Hemisphere and at Pittsburg 1843 the first Convent of Mercy in the United States. Soon afterwards not only convents and schools but orphanages, hospitals and homes for young women were established by the Sisters in America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

The Centenary of the Order was celebrated in 1931 when the following statistics of the Order were presented.

(1) **CONVENTS OF MERCY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Convents</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Nuns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>196.</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>93.</td>
<td>B.West Indies</td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel Is.</td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>South America</td>
<td>12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>252.</td>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>46.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 1,507 Convents; 20,462 Nuns.

CHAPTER 11.
THE COMING AND EARLY ACTIVITIES OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY

It was as a result of the concerted effort of French missionaries and Irish immigrants that the Catholic Church was established in New Zealand. In 1838 Monsignor Jean Baptiste Pompallier, newly-named Vicar Apostolic of Western Oceania of which New Zealand then formed a part, landed at Hokianga where he and his intrepid band of Marists were warmly welcomed by an Irish settler, Thomas Poynton, and whence he set forth determined to roughhew his way and blaze the trail for his followers. In response to his appeals to Europe, priests trickled into the country and according as these became available, he established mission stations throughout the land. Realising the needs of his growing flock Bishop Pompallier embarked for Rome in 1846, and two years later, New Zealand was divided into two dioceses Auckland and Wellington. Bishop Viard who had been Bishop Pompallier's coadjutor since 1846, was appointed first Bishop of Wellington with the Marist Fathers as his helpers, while Bishop Pompallier retained the charge of Auckland from which diocese the Marist Fathers were to withdraw in favour of secular clergy, as soon as the diocese was sufficiently staffed with priests.
On his return journey from Europe in 1849, Bishop Pompallier called at St. Leo's Convent of Mercy, Carlow, Ireland, where he begged for volunteers for his remote sea-girt mission. Mother Cecilia Maher, then Superior of the Carlow Convent, privately offered herself for the distant mission as did several other members of the Community. (1) When it became known that Mother Cecilia Maher had volunteered, the whole community in a body besought Bishop Haly, then in charge of the diocese, to dissuade her. Though aware of the singular merit of their Superior, this zealous pastor very pertinently asked the Sisters how they, themselves, would have got the Faith, if St. Patrick and St Augustine had remained at home. He told them, that, though he was sorry to part with any of them, God's glory demanded the sacrifice. So on August 8th, 1849, Mother Cecilia Maher and seven companions set out from St. Leo's Carlow, to travel to the remote ends of the earth there to carry on the works of Mercy - the amelioration of the spiritual educational and physical needs of the growing population. In the "Southern Cross", one of New Zealand's earliest newsprints, we find the following, dated Friday, April 12th 1850:

"Shipping List"

April 9. - "Oceania", of Antwerp, 533 tons, Captain

Gustavus Radou, from Sydney, the 21st March.

Passengers: Bishop Pompallier 10 (sic) Sisters of Mercy...

"The New Zealander," a contemporary Auckland Newspaper, bearing like date gives the names of those Sisters: "... Mesdames Marie Maher, Elizabeth Hughes, Mary Pagès, Mary Franklin, Mary Maher, Elizabeth Taylor, Mary Bannox and Mary Slattery." Thus after braving the rigours of the Atlantic and Pacific for eight months in a (1) 533-ton sailing vessel, Mother Cecilia Maher and her seven companions reached Auckland, then but a small struggling village, where they were to establish themselves as the first religious community of women to set foot upon New Zealand soil. "The Southern Cross" has the following account of their landing and welcome: "On Tuesday afternoon a large assemblage was gathered together at Smale's Point to witness the arrival of Bishop Pompallier, the worthy gentleman had, however, debarked in private, and the crowd was gratified with a sight of the Sisters of Charity (sic), and several members of the Roman Catholic priesthood. As the bell was tolling, a rush took place and the church was speedily thronged by an eager auditory. Mass was celebrated and a "Te Deum" chanted with no inconsiderable ability by the choir especially considering the crowded state of the church and the excitement of the occasion."

1. "The Southern Cross" April 12th, 1850, as recorded in The Seventy Fifth Anniversary (Bishop Cleary) Page 5.
However, in the interests of historical truth, we quote from a more accurate account of that memorable day. (1) "Old residents have told us, 'ere they passed to their reward, that everyone in the village was down to the shores of the vanished Commercial Bay to welcome the nuns, the Catholics being in the Minority. The newly-arrived ladies were rowed ashore in an open boat, to land at Smale's Point, at the spot where now stand the Government Buildings in Customs Street West. A Procession was formed. Preceded by the whole Catholic Population up the ti-tree lined track, then (as now) called Albert Street, the Sisters in twos, flanked by Catholic members of the garrison as guard-of-honour, were followed by acolytes, the priests, the venerable Bishop and his coadjutor, Dr. Viard, S.M. When they reached St. Patrick's, Pontifical Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was given, hymns were sung and the Magnificat and Te Deum intoned by the Bishops, priests and Sisters. Dr. Pompallier briefly expressed his gratitude to God for this happy culmination of his dearest wishes, and welcomed the Sisters to their new home. The citizens afterwards extended their greetings in the recently erected school-room, where refreshments were provided for all. The Convent was a neat little wooden house, the walls lined with canvas and then covered with paper."

1. "Seventy-fifth Anniversary." (Dr. Cleary) p. 15
To the newcomers, Auckland presented a novel picture of town life. Mother Cecilia describes the town of Auckland in 1850 (1) as "singular-looking, partly in a valley and partly straggling up a hill; wooden houses, streets marked, but sparsely strewn with dwellings; grass everywhere."

(2) The European population of the Colony then totalled about 30,000 of whom 35 per cent were in Auckland; 22 per cent in Wellington; 16.6 per cent in Nelson; 12.3 per cent in Canterbury; 7.7 per cent in Otago and 6.4 per cent in New Plymouth. (3) Of the 105,000 Maoris then in the country more than two-thirds dwelt in Auckland while fewer than 2,000 were then to be found in the South Island. The variety of the climate, the character of the soil, and the nature of the surface-vegetation, largely determined the distribution of the population so that, while some fortunate, fertile localities could support a fairly dense population, others - particularly such as were mountainous or subject to heavy rainfall - were quite uninhabited. The expansion of Northern settlements was difficult because of the hilly nature of the country, and it took stout hearts and broad backs to clear and burn through the dense forest in order to link by roads the various settlements, and thus enable out-settlers to carry their laboriously-procured produce to some convenient centre.

3. "The Romance of New Zealand" (Horsley.)
from which it could be exported. Gradually their unflagging industry and the steady increase in population begot new conditions of life throughout the land, so that in 1850 Mother Cecilia Maher could write from Auckland -

(1) "No aristocracy here; all are comfortable. Immigrants are Irish or English."

She gives the following tariff of the necessaries of life in Auckland 1850:-

"Good tea, 1s. 6d. per pound; sugar, 3d.; beef and mutton, very inferior, 6d.; very good pork, 4d.; butter in summer 10d.; and in winter 2 or 3 shillings; excellent potatoes very cheap. Servants £15 to £20 a year; washerwomen, 2s. 6d. a day; mechanics, 7s. 6d.; labourers, 5s. No poverty where there was industry."

Some years before the Sisters' arrival, (2) Father Petitjean had opened a school "for the children of immigrants" and with the able assistance of stalwart laymen he pioneered the work of education. However, (3) it was not until the coming of the Sisters of Mercy, in 1850, that the education of Catholic youth in Auckland became an organised undertaking. In 1850 the Sisters took over Father Petitjean's school, known as "St. Patrick's" and soon they opened another - a sort of secondary school - dedicated to St. Francis. Their Schools began with seventy Catholics eight of whom were war-orphans and fifteen Protestants. They also improvised in the first week and orphan-

2. "Auckland Times" March 9th 1843 (not signed)
3. "Seventy-fifth Anniversary" (Dr. Cleary) Page 17.
age in which to provide for the children of soldiers who had fallen in the Maori Wars. (1) Their efforts in this field were so successful that to-day they have two well-equipped homes, the one for girls at Howick, the other for boys at Takapuna. It was not during school hours alone that the Sisters were kept busy. Many (2) immigrants and native women came regularly to be instructed. The natives were delighted with the Sisters, any of whom, during their tedious journey of eight months, had acquired the Maori language. A chieftainess came to the convent and wept on seeing the Sisters; at length, she exclaimed:

"I was in a state of suffering until I saw the sacred girls'. Now I begin to live."

(3) By the end of 1850 the school roll was 158 comprising 65 infants, 75 girls as well as 18 in the Orphanage. The school re-opened in 1851 with 240 children in addition to 14 from the Orphanage and 12 native girls. During this year Sir George Grey visited the Sisters' schools and described them as being "exceedingly well-conducted."

(4) In 1852 Mother Cecilia reported to Carlow:

"We have an orphanage, three schools - an infant school, one for grown girls and a select or benefit school. We have also a house for native girls where after being instructed and taught everything useful, they leave and go among the tribes and others are taken."

3. Seventy-Fifth Anniversary. (Dr. Cleary) p. 17.
4. Ibid.
"Here is a specimen of a Maori pupil;"

One of our native girls has returned to her tribe. She is eighteen, very modest, religious, and edifying in her conduct. She is very talented. After learning to read and write her own language she was taught English, which she speaks nicely, but with a lisp. She reads and writes English well, went through with Arithmetic, and has a good idea of geography. At examinations she was often asked to point out remarkable places on the map; her knowledge of the equator, zones, etc., would surprise you. She can wash, iron, knit stockings, crotchet, make and bake bread, cut out dresses. She helped to make a rochet for the bishop; can scrub a house and put it in order. As you may suppose, she is regarded with admiration by all. She has a school of thirty of her country girls (in the Bush). Some Europeans go to her.

As a result of Mother Cecilia's earnest entreaties Carlow Convent opened a novitiate for Auckland and from time to time sent out reinforcements. (2) In 1857 a band of five Sisters about to embark at Chelsea, were visited and encouraged by Cardinal Wiseman, who was deeply interested in New Zealand. (3) Of the next contingent which arrived in 1860, one member, Mother Bernard, the daughter of

1. Ibid Page 615.
General Sir Sheffield Dixon, and grand-daughter of the sixth Marquis of Lothian, had served in the Scutari Base Hospital and was destined to found the first convent in Wellington in July, 1861.

On (1) December 8th, 1861, Bishop Pompallier blessed the foundations of the present Mother House Mount Street, Ponsonby, and wrote the following to Father Therry of Sydney:

"... The Sisters of Mercy (have) a part of Diocesan ground of eighteen (18) acres in extent near Auckland itself for religious, charitable, and educational purposes, viz.: for their parent convent in the Diocese, for a Hospital, and for their vast establishments of boarding-schools in favour of both races, 'whites and native' of this country. The intended establishment, not yet built, shall cost very likely between three and four thousand pounds.... To build it, I depend on the charity of the faithful, and upon the assistance of God in His paternal providence."

In 1852 the care of native children was handed over to Dr. Pmpallier's new Order called the Holy Family. This Order did not survive the Bishop's departure, and his niece, who was its Superior returned with him to France. Yet the existence of this Order is of historical interest for two reasons. (2) It included several members of the Maori race who were undoubtedly the first Maori women to take the veil. In that Order also we first meet the noble-hearted Suzanna Aubert who, before founding the Order of the Sisters of Compassion, spent nearly a quarter of a

1. Ibid. p. 19.
2. "Zealandia" (M. Goulter). November 18th, 1937.
century among the natives, teaching the children and assisting the sick and aged.

The Sisters of Mercy were devoted to the Maoris from the very start. (1) For Maori women who had to travel to Auckland in order to dispose of their vegetables and fruit, Mother Cecilia opened a house of hospitality with the idea of protecting them from dangers to which they might find themselves exposed in undesirable boarding-houses. The Sisters were often impressed with the heroic virtue of the native girls under their care:

(2) "Once," writes Mother Cecilia, "as our orphans and native girls were walking on the shore, one of the children climbed a rock overhanging the sea; her foot slipped and she fell down some yards, and grasping some shrubs, screamed for help. The situation was terrific; a priest and a settler looked on shuddering. But one of the native children leaped like a deer down from the rock and seizing the almost breathless child, bore her in triumph to her companions."

Mother Cecilia's constant solicitude for the Maoris awakened in them a lively gratitude and gave her such influence over them that a few words from her often made peace between hostile tribes. (3) On one occasion when two rival tribes were on the point of attacking each other, Mother Cecilia sent them, by a friendly native, a flag on which was worked a dove bearing an olive branch under which was inscribed the message - "The sacred girls beg the

1. "Leaves from the Annals" Vol. 11. p. 615.
2. "Leaves from the Annals" Vol. 11. p. 605
3. Ibid. p. 607.
hostile parties to become good friends." At once both tribes yielded to her entreaties and hostilities were averted.

During their second decade in the country of their adoption the Sisters experienced the horrors of the devastating, Maori Wars when they did much to assuage the sufferings of the distressed and afflicted. They, themselves, suffered such extreme privations that in a letter Home, Mother Cecilia remarks that (1) there was not a single pound in the house. "It was with anxiety and solicitude that they made out what was barely necessary."
The Sisters were often impressed by the gratitude of the Maoris. Whenever the slightest danger threatened their dwelling, both parties gave them notice and assured them that, no matter what happened, the 'sacred girls' would be safe. (2) Once, in the thick of war, a chief at the risk of his life came into the harbour and calling at the convent warned the Sisters to be ready to flee if the worst should come. He endeavoured to allay their fears by pledging his word to give them timely notice and to convey them to secure refuge.

Of the Sisters' work in Auckland during this time Cardinal Moran writes:

(3) "They proved themselves true Apostles to both the

2. Ibid. p. 608.
European and the natives in Auckland and throughout the whole Diocese. Amid 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 horrors and ravages of savage warfare, and with all 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 handed on to the faithful of the Diocese the tradition of piety and the blessings of religion."

Eighty years after their arrival, on the occasion of the centennial celebrations of the Order in 1931, the Sisters' work was still held in loving memory.

(1) "The arrival of the pioneer Sisters," says a writer in 'Zealandia,' "during the episcopate of His Lordship, Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier (whose memory is still deeply revered by the Maori people throughout New Zealand) was an epoch-making event in the social and religious progress of this country."

"Therein we are not forgetful of the fact that our people substantially participated in the benefits thereof - for many of our women-folk of the past, several generations were educated at the convent schools - and the names of the Sisters of Mercy are held in household reverence in many homes."

For nearly twenty years, Mother Cecilia and her community dwelt in a tottering old house with Lady Poverty as a constant companion. (2) Yet when the financial crisis came in the wake of the Maori Wars, their five convents were found to be free of debt. However poorly they lived, the culture of good books and good music was always cherished. Even when poverty obliged them to economise in food and clothing, the libraries were well stocked and

---

1. "Zealandia" (M. Goulter) November 18th, 1937.
every book that was a help to spirituality or education was ordered from Europe as soon as it appeared. (1) "Buy every good book for us" appears in Mother Cecilia's letters home almost as frequently as "send us subjects."

In 1861 the present "Old Convent," St. Mary's, Ponsonby, became the Mother House, and Novitiate. For seventeen years this convent was hallowed by the presence of Mother Cecilia and is still redolent of her self-sacrificing spirit. Here still lives in her daughters, that whole-hearted solicitude for the poor, the erring, the sick and the orphaned.

MOTHER CECILIA MAHER.

AUCKLAND FOUNDATIONS.
CHAPTER 11.

MOTHER CECILIA MAHER - AUCKLAND FOUNDATIONS

Of women pioneers of the Catholic Faith in New Zealand the name of Mother Cecilia (Ellen) Maher, like Abou Ben Adhem's name, might easily lead all the rest. Her arrival on these shores, at the head of the little band of Sisters of Mercy in 1850, is a prominent landmark of Catholic progress in New Zealand. Ellen Maher was born at (1) Freshford, Co.Kilkenny, Ireland on September 13th, 1799, and while yet but a child sheshouldered the responsibility of mothering her five young step-sisters whose own mother treated them with unnatural harshness and severity. Thus, even in her own home, she began her career of self forgetfulness and service to others, showing affectionate sympathy for the sick and afflicted as well as maternal love for the child. One of her step-sisters died in childhood, the other four entered religion and laboured disinterestedly in the service of the neighbour under foreign skies.

Though Ellen Maher was not free to follow her vocation until she was thirty-nine years old, yet she was destined to become a foundress of religious life in a new land.

Entering (2) St. Leo's Convent of Mercy, Carlow, Ireland, in 1833, she was appointed Mistress of Novices

---

four years later, and with her outstanding qualities of mind and heart was elected Superior of the Carlow Convent in 1842. This office she still filled when, in 1849, she generously answered Bishop Pompallier's appeal for volunteers for his hazardous mission in a land shaken by earthquakes and distressed by native wars. Her brave and cheerful spirit counted not the cost, nor did it suggest to her that on account of age - she was now past her prime - she might well commend to someone younger, the sponsoring of such an arduous undertaking. From her seven years' experience as Mother Superior in Carlow, Mother Cecilia well knew the burdensome cares attached to that office, yet from 1850 to 1868, she bore that yoke unflinchingly, guiding her Auckland community through the toilsome years of furrow digging by "superintending every detail connected with the pioneering work of the young community." Fired with apostolic zeal and defiant of danger, there hovered about her a radiance of love and helpfulness as she struggled heroically with the scantiest resources to secure a foothold in the land of her adoption. Her ardent piety and high executive ability so noteworthy in her life in Auckland, have become a treasured tradition. In 1868 she was given a well-

2. Ibid. Page 23.
earned rest from her administrative duties but was obliged to resume office in 1871. Now, as before in her role as administrator of the affairs of the community, she displayed a keeness of discernment and an adaptation of means to the end, while always there was the same compass of mind the same good sense. Ever cheerful, even when a loser, she served as a constant source of inspiration to those around her. Her overwhelming earnestness, and the spirit she infused into all with whom she came in contact, largely contributed to the perpetuation in the Auckland community of the real spirit of Catherine McAuley. From Mother Cecilia her subjects imbibed the (1) Christlike spirit that should animate the approach to, and the solution of, the problems connected with the poor, the suffering, and the neglected of humanity. For Maori and white alike, she had the word of personal appeal and inspiration, which particularly suited each case, her exhortations assuming the form surest to impress the soul she desired to reach. Having fully demonstrated by her life, (2) what charity means, what service means, what true progress means, her glowing heart poured out its last words of hope and consolation on November 25th, 1878. During the two days that her remains lay in state in the convent chapel she had loved so well, (3) crowds whom she

1. Gately, op. cit. page 5.
3. "Zealandia" (Coulter) Nov. 18, 1937.
had taught as well as numbers of non-Catholics whom she had befriended, came to pay her their last respects. After Requiem Mass she was borne by ten Sisters to her last resting place in Mount St. Mary's Cemetery.

(1). If, as scientists tell us, not a leaf falls to the ground, not a pebble rolls upon the shore without in some measure affecting the harmony of the universe, what tremendous forces must have been put in motion, changing the cowardice of weakness into strength of endeavour, rounding immature impulse into the shapeliness of fixed purpose and keeping alive the fire of prayerful devotion in the dark places of life, by the union of faith and good works which marked the earthly career of Mother Cecilia!

(2). FOUNDATIONS SCHOOLS.

ST. MARY'S, PONSONBY: In a small wooden building, St. Patrick's, Hobson Street, Auckland - the first in New Zealand to be designated a Convent - the pioneer Sisters entered in 1850 on the first decade of their activities beneath the Southern Cross. In 1863 the tottering condition of this house induced the original band and their first recruits to remove to Mount St. Mary's, Ponsonby, which has since become pregnant with valued memories and hallowed traditions. The new building included besides the

1. Catholic World. (Number lost.)
2. Information received from Auckland Community and from "Zealandia" (Goulter) Nov. 7th, 1937.
convent proper, a fine boarding and day school for secondary pupils, an orphanage for girls, and St. Joseph's, a primary school. However, school accommodation was still inadequate and after the forming of the Sacred Heart parish in 1886 the church was used as a school. Roll numbers increased and in 1893 we find three Sisters of Mercy and Miss Foote teaching in the church some 150 pupils. In 1895 Sacred Heart Girl's School was opened, in which girls and boys were taught until 1913 when with the opening of the Vermont Street Schools, the Marist Brothers took over the boys. In 1929 at a cost of £36,000 St. Mary's boarding and day schools gave place to the present superstructure in Spanish Mission style of architecture so attractively girt with neat lawns and friendly trees. The traditions of many generations of successful pupils combined with the most modern equipment for the imparting of a many sided education by trained teachers, several of whom are University graduates, are marked features of St. Mary's College. The annual successes of the pupils in University and other public examinations wherein they hold their own with the public schools and Colleges of the Dominion, together with the results which are achieved by its pupils in the examinations held by the two leading London Colleges of Music - Trinity College and the Associated Board of Music - continue to give evidence
of the high standard of work maintained throughout St. Mary's College. In addition, the pupils are taught to put into practice the ideals of Catholic education which Cardinal Newman has epitomised as follows:

"I wish the intellect to range with the utmost freedom, but what I am stipulating for is, that they should be found in one and the same place, and exemplified in the same person. I want the same roof to contain both the intellectual and moral discipline."

A junior Mercy Guild by its activities keeps the school children in touch with the needy, and an enthusiastic Old Girls' Association unites ex-students who joyfully look forward to their re-unions.

1850, ST. PATRICK'S AUCKLAND: This, the first school in which the Sisters taught, gave place in 1880 to the new convent and schools erected by Archbishop Stein, S.J. on the site now occupied by the Farmers' Parking Area, corner of Hobson and Wyndham Streets. Thousands of scholars conned their daily tasks in this school which in time gave way to the new St. Patrick's, a handsome brick building erected on a new site and adorned with the wooden crosses of "Old St. Patrick's," which it still rears aloft as it daily gathers in its three hundred pupils. To this primary school is attached a registered Technical School in which pupils pursue an efficient post-primary course.

1862, ST. JOHN'S, PARNELL: A little cottage, to which the Sisters either walked or drove in the Bishop's carriage,
served for years as the first convent school here.

St. John's was opened in 1862 by S.M. Regis, S.M. de Chantal and S.M. Ignatius. The present attendance is round 100.

1861. St. Joseph's, Onehunga: Here S.M. Philomena, S.M. Veronica and Sister Marie opened a school for girls in 1864, and in 1905 boys were admitted. The roll is 263.

1866. St. Cecilia's, Otahuhu: This school, founded by S.M. Agnes, S.M. Philomena and S.M. Scholastica, has now a daily attendance of about 215. In 1874, the Sisters opened St. Thomas's, Thames, which in 1911 they gave over to the Sisters of St. Joseph.

1882. St. Mary's, Coramandel: The requisite funds for the building of this convent were collected by Rev. Father Mahoney, O.F.M., V.G. The first Sisters to go there were S.M. Gabriel, S.M. Barbara, S.M. Alphonsus. When nurses were badly needed in Coromandel, Sisters from this convent attended the public hospital daily, and when the new public hospital was built there, in 1896, the Sisters took temporary charge and lived there until the opening of their own Mater Hospital in 1900.

1894. St. Joseph's Orphanage, Takapuna: On their arrival in New Zealand in 1850, the Sisters relieved the Marist Fathers of the responsibility of looking after eight orphans, children of soldiers who had fallen in the Northern Maori Wars. In 1894 S.M. Alphonsus and S.M. Mildred
established St. Joseph's Orphanage at Takapuna and in 1900 when the boarding-out system was begun, an industrial school was opened. Fire destroyed the orphanage in 1923 and in the following year it was rebuilt, and reopened by Archbishop Cattaneo and Lord Jellicoe. By 1927 the original eight orphans had given place to hundreds and a new feature, that year, was the admission of boys of the parish to the day school.

1896. St. Leo's, Devonport: This school, called after the great parent-house Carlow, was opened by S.M. Peter, S.M. Columba and S.M. Stanislaus with a roll-call of seventy children. The present roll is 125.

1902. St. Catherine's, Waihi: This, the first Mercy Convent opened in the present century in New Zealand, had for its original staff four Sisters, S.M. Francesca, S.M. Raymond, S.M. Frances and S.M. Stanislaus. It has six Sisters on the staff now and a roll of 100.

1903. Te Aroha, Our Lady of Lourdes: From the outlying, scattered dairy-farms of this district two Sisters, Sister Mary Patrick and S.M. Columba, gathered in thirty children with whom they opened this school in 1903. The roll has now risen to 188. In 1904 the Sisters opened St. Dominic's Convent, Gisborne, but in 1915 this convent was taken over by the Sisters of St. Joseph.

1921. Holy Cross, Epsom: Three Sisters, S.M. Benignus,
S.M. Borromeo and S.M. Cecilia began work here in 1921 but the building was burnt to the ground in 1928 when the Sisters were lent the presbytery by the late Rev. T.J. O'Byrne. The convent was immediately rebuilt and has now a roll of 132.

Besides the work of teaching and the visitation in their homes of the sick poor, the Sisters also visit the Auckland Infirmary.

1922. Mount Carmel, Milford: With the intention of providing a rest-house for women this house was opened. However, it has so far been used as a school for boys under twelve. This foundation is of particular interest because the property adjoins the farm and homestead of Thomas and Mary Poynton, whose daughter, Mrs. Shea, gave them to the Sisters.

1923. St. Bride's, Avondale: From a beginning made by five Sisters, S.M. Berchmans, S.M. Monica, S.M. Josepha, S.M. Aloysius and S.M. Malachy with eighty-two children this school has increased its staff to seven Sisters and its roll to 200. Three Sisters who serve Holy Cross, Henderson, reside here.

1925. Star of the Sea Orphanage, Howick: From 1913 the "Pah" had been used by the Sisters as a girls' orphanage but in 1925 the girls moved into "Star of the Sea", a new building, part of which was of wood. The wooden part was destroyed by fire in 1929 and the following year saw the erection of the new block together with the beautiful Bishop - Cleary - Memorial Chapel - a fitting tribute to him.
who so loved the orphans.

1926. Monte Cecilia College, Hillsborough Rd., Onehunga: The residence known as the "Pah," a building of historic interest, was purchased by the Sisters in 1913 and used as an orphanage until 1925, in which year, it was turned into a boarding school for boys too young for an ordinary college. The children of the surrounding district were also admitted to the day school.

1927. St. Mary's, Pawarenga: The natives of this district were visited by Rev. Fathers Servant and Baty S.M. as far back as 1839. Four Sisters, S.M. Anselm, S.M. Marcellus, S.M. Helen and S.M. Cyril founded this school for the natives in 1927. The number attending is 92. "The (1) Sisters conduct several schools for the native children, one at Whangape, an almost inaccessible point in the extreme north of the North Island, where the little Maoris endear themselves to the Religious by their docility, intelligence and eagerness for instruction."

1932. Holy Cross, Henderson: This school as has been stated is served by three Sisters who reside at St. Bride's, Avondale. The roll is 115.

(2) Hospitals: As the care of the sick is one of the cherished works of the Order of Mercy, the Sisters eagerly longed for

1. Gately op. cit. p. 221.
2. Supplement N.Z. Herald Feb. 23rd. 1938, (not signed.) "Zealandia" (Goulter) Nov. 18th, 1937. Correspondence with Auckland Sisters.
the day when they would be able to open a hospital in Auckland. At last the time seemed ripe for such an undertaking and on November 7th, 1900 the Sisters purchased a large private residence in Mountain Road, on the northern slope of Mount Eden. With M.M. Ignatius as Superior, and a staff of three Sisters and five nurses, the hospital entered on its career with eight patients, and after twenty years of enduring labour was quite free from debt. Then the need for greater accommodation was felt and soon a two storey brick building was added. By 1925 this too proved inadequate for their work and to commemorate the Silver Jubilee a fine, large residence was converted into a convent and chapel and named "St. Ignatius" after the hospital foundress. As the training of the Sisters was of vital importance, several, who showed aptitude for the nursing profession, were sent to the leading institutes in Australia, St. Vincent's Hospital and the Mater Hospital, Sydney, where they specialised in several branches of hospital nursing. The thorough training gained there formed the firm foundation for the striking success and exceptional speed with which they have pressed onward for the thirty-nine years of the present century. After the passage of legislation enabling approved, privately-owned hospitals to train nurses the Sisters pursued the idea of building a new hospital of the most modern style. For this purpose
Mother M. Gonzaga and Mother M. Agnes, nursing enthusiasts, were sent to America to see there all modern hospitals and appliances. As the Sisters travelled through the United States and Canada they visited each hospital of note, including the famous Mayo Clinic, and culled from each, wider knowledge and experience. As a result of that visit there now stands on the slopes of Mount Eden, a magnificent Mater Misericordiae Hospital with every conceivable convenience. This towering edifice can accommodate one hundred and twenty patients and is complete with the world's latest and best in hospital appliances as well as x-ray rooms, private rooms a-la-mode and pleasant public wards. In these wards the Sisters delight to lavish on the poor that loving care and attention inculcated by their revered foundress. The hospital is well staffed with twenty-three Sisters, fifty-six nurses and very full administrative and domestic staffs. The two foundresses, Mother M. Gonzaga and Mother M. Agnes are still in charge of the institution and have grateful memories of the sustained progress which it has made. On (1) Jan. 1st, 1937 the Mater Misericordiae was officially registered as an approved, private hospital with Training School capable of training nurses. Ever solicitous for the happiness and well-being of the nurses, the Sisters erected

1. "Zealandia" Nov. 18th, 1937 (M. Goulter.)
for them in 1938 "a comfortable, even stylish home" to which they retire during their hours of rest and leisure.

As testimony of the high esteem in which the Sisters are held by the medical profession we have the following tribute from Mr. Frank Macky, President of the Auckland Division of the British Medical Association:

(2) "The Sisters have earned the esteem of the profession throughout the world. They have earned it in an unlimited sense for their enterprise, for their readiness always to go to the last degree beyond the limits of a meagre purse in the provision of hospital accommodation and facilities. They are to be admired for their faith, and for the conviction that a job well done will earn its own reward."

Likewise the Sisters are loud in their praise of the members of the medical profession. They realise that the public wards, in which doctors generously attend in an honorary capacity, frequently witness scenes of noble self-sacrifice and sublime, unostentatious endurance unequalled elsewhere; showing as Pope says that:

"In Faith and Hope the world will disagree,

But all Mankind's concern is Charity."
Early in 1850 Bishop Viard with five Marist Fathers and ten Brothers left Auckland for the newly-created Diocese of Wellington which had been entrusted to the Society of Mary. Shortly (1) after his arrival the Bishop directed the building of a cathedral, presbytery and convent, and petitioned Auckland and Melbourne for Sisters of Mercy to teach the children who were growing up without any education, religious or secular. Sisters could then be only promised, and pending their arrival he staffed the schools with four young ladies who were desirous of becoming nuns, and on September 8th, 1850 opened St. Mary's, the first Catholic girls' School, in Wellington. (2) The two-acre site, in the town belt, on which the convent was built was the gift of Lord Petre, whose daughter subsequently became a Wellington Sister of Mercy. In 1861, the faithful Mother Cecilia kept her promise and sent the Bishop three volunteers from Auckland, S. M. Augustine Maxwell, S. M. Bernard, who had served at Scutari, and Sister Marie, a postulant, to establish the first convent in Wellington. (3) The town then extended mainly along the beach and held a population of some five hundred, of whom

1. "Zealandia" Nov. 10th, 1837. (E. Goulter)
3. Ibid. p. 654.
only forty were Catholic adults, while those in the outlying districts, "dwellers in the pathless woods" on account of bad roads or tracks, were almost completely isolated from their town neighbours. However, despite the small proportion of Catholic adults, the Sisters took charge of over (1) sixty children in the primary grades and forty-four others including twenty boarders, ready to start at the High School. Though by this time the natural wealth of the country was becoming known and appreciated, the Sisters found their first twelve years in Wellington the leanest imaginable. They experienced the chill of meagre and uncertain resources, the cramp of quarters so straitened that one (2) room served as infirmary, community room, music-room and parlour, and the utmost anxiety on account of a staff numerically inadequate to cope with the demands of ever increasing numbers of pupils. Yet, they pressed on, seeking help from diverse sources until, in 1873, the intensity of their plight wrung from Mother M. Ursula Frayne of Melbourne two of her community — Mother M. Cecilia Benbow and Mother M. Xavier Butler — destined to put St. Mary's on its feet. Heartened by the potent enthusiasm of the new Sisters the little group struggled on and slowly, but steadily, the tide turned in their favour. Better housing and

1. "Zealandia" Nov. 18th, 1937. (H. Goulter.)
more spacious class-rooms became a necessity; so in 1876
(1) Mother Cecilia Benbow left for Europe in search of teachers
and funds and returned two years later with sixteen Sisters
and £2,000. She lost no time in directing the building of
new premises and before the year was out the present convent
group, St. Mary's, Hill Street, had been erected. From its
inception St. Mary's High School has stood for the best in
higher education; it aims at the training of young women
for efficiency in things intellectual and social but its
chief care is the development of character according to the
ideals of true Catholic womanhood. (2) Its first pupils were
truly a picked band, children of pioneers whose own (3) in-
tellectual pursuits had, perforce, to give way to sustained
effort in order to wrest a livelihood from virgin soil. With
these pioneers (4) "education was almost a passion" and we
are not surprised to find their daughters travelling to
school in a sailing ship and living on ship's biscuit and
salt pork when contrary winds made the journey longer than
they had anticipated. So perilous were these journeyings
to and from school, that sometimes on their return after the
holidays, the children found the Sisters praying for their
souls as for those lost at sea. It was not any catalogued
number of courses which the school professed, that induced these

1. "Zealandia" Nov. 18th, 1937. (M. Goulter.)
2. Ibid.
pioneers to expose their children to such risks, rather was it the conviction that, side by side with intellectual and artistic culture, went the persistent leavening of the moral character. More up-to-date facilities in accommodation and class-room equipment called for attention and in 1930 at a cost of £20,000 the new college in Hill Street, was upreared under the direction of Mother M. de Sales Goulter, who for thirty years had served as Principal of the High School. This new St. Mary's College with its excellently equipped class-room, library, studio, dress-making room and large assembly hall furnishes ideal environment for the pursuit of all branches of secondary work. (2) The roll for last year was 62 boarders, 154 secondary,

From small beginnings at St. Mary's of 1861 on Golden's Hill the Order of Mercy has radiated branches throughout the Archdiocese and Suffragan Sees.

(3) GUILDFORD TERRACE, THORNDON, 1851: Teachers 4, pupils 134.

This flourishing parochial school for girls dates back to twenty-eight years before the State system of education was set up in New Zealand. In 1861 the school was taken over by the Sisters and to-day there is found within its walls the third generation of its first pupils. Singing

1. "Zealandia" Nov. 9th, 1937. (M.Goulter.)
is a speciality with the pupils as is annually testified by their achievement in this field.

St. Joseph's, Upper Hutt, 1852: Teachers 6, pupils 248.

Bishop Viard with his marked predilection for the Maoris built a home called "Providence" for native and half-caste girls on a strip of land (1) granted for the purpose by Governor, Sir George Grey in 1852. As soon as the Sisters of Mercy were in residence in Wellington, they took over the charge of this Providence and taught the Maoris to read English intelligently and fluently, to write neatly and well, to make their own clothing and to keep their quarters clean and tidy. A visitor to the Providence in 1879 wrote -

(2) "The children have separate bed-rooms and are all scrupulously neat and clean. Each room opens into a long passage and there is perfect ventilation. The teaching and supervision of the school is the gratuitous work of those in charge."

These Maori girls on return to their tribes became a potent influence in the spreading of European culture for, as Sir Apirana Ngata claims -

(3) "One of the greatest services rendered by the schools, especially the secondary schools, to the Maori race is the gradual dissolution of the communal idea for which the word "kianga" stands, and the persistent substitution of the pakeha idea of home .... The educated young women could not imbibe new ideas and tastes during their residence in the secondary schools without insisting on changes in the village life. They have in-

---

1. "Zealandia" Nov. 18th, 1937. (K. Goulter.)
fluenced their elders and the young men to conform to the new standards."

Too soon, however, the Maoris showed a tendency to move inland and children of the incoming Europeans were also received at the Providence. The Maori-loving Bishop Viard died in 1872 and in 1876, owing to the need for greater accommodation, his old house, the gift of Bishop Redwood, was converted into an extra wing for the Providence, which thus prolonged its existence until the end of the century.

Ready by the new century stood a new stone orphanage on the old site but, by 1909, even this was over-crowded and gave way to the present St. Joseph's, Upper Hutt, the land for which was the gift of (1) Hon, H.W. Petre of Woburn Estate. Later, a desirable adjoining property was purchased, which extension has made possible the flourishing farm which now affords no little help in supplying the needs of some two-hundred and fifty children. Up to 1918 St. Joseph's was exclusively for girls; but the catastrophic epidemic of that year deprived so many children of both parents that the Sisters (2) improvised a boy's home out of a stout old stable which still withstands the invasions of vigorous youths. The upkeep of this double orphanage is a constant source of anxiety to the Sisters in charge. It is mainly financed by a large, annual donation from the T.G. McCarthy Trust, by the yearly diocesan collection, and by devices

1. "Zealandia" Nov., 9th, 1937. (W.Goulter.)
such as Street Days.

**ST. Philomena's, 1873:**

Immigration had so flooded the country by 1873 that numbers of Catholic children (1) strayed through streets and by-ways of Te Aro without a single Catholic school to gather them in. Mother M. Augustine Maxwell perceived the want and with the generous co-operation of Rev. Father Cummings succeeded in converting the top story of a shop in Willis Street into two school-rooms. It was a plucky beginning but the shop-school proved to be very inconvenient and in 1874 the Sisters with £900 secured a more suitable property in Dixon Street. The number of pupils again increased beyond the capacity of the accommodation provided for them, so in 1878 new schools were built and a High School added in 1900. (2) In 1908 the Dixon Street property was sold but the new High School was removed to Brougham Street where it is still in use. That year saw the erection of a branch convent in Brougham Street where the present convent was built some few years ago, and where reside the Sisters who teach in the Buckle Street Sacred Heart School with its 250 pupils.

**Blenheim, 1885:**

On 25th August, 1885, the Wellington Sisters of Mercy opened a branch convent and High School in Blenheim and

2. "Zealandia" Nov. 18th, 1937. (M.Goulter.)
took charge of the already existing school for girls. In
1889 an Infant School was built and seven years later the
Sisters accepted charge of the boys' school which, since
1872, had been in the hands of a succession of masters.
Soon after the incoming of the present century the present
fine convent and High School were built in Maxwell Road
opposite the old site. (1) Total number of pupils 249.

Newton, 1890: Teachers 7, pupils 260:

His Grace, Archbishop Redwood, formally opened
St. Joseph's Convent School in Adelaide Street, Newton, on
June 30th, 1890. To this school the Sisters travelled by
tramcar for ten years until in 1900 they had the happiness
of establishing there a branch convent, St. Anne's, together
with a new parish school and St. Joseph's High School in
Daniel Street.

Seatoun, 1909, Parochial School Preparatory College:

A little cottage situated on the present Church
property served as Church and School for many years. In 1909
the parochial school, St Anthony's, was opened and the
Sisters who teach here reside at the preparatory college
which was also built in 1909 under the title of Star of the
Sea. The college is admirably situated commanding a wide
view of the sea and is well provided with playing-areas,
marked off into tennis courts, croquet lawns and football

fields. Mother M. Bernard Redwood has for many years been in charge here where she has received boys from all parts of New Zealand. Some of these boys have become priests, some doctors, others lawyers, but whatever their subsequent calling, many of them return to move again, if only for a half hour midst the scenes of their care-free days.

Kilbirnie, 1912:

Alterations for conventual needs were made in three rooms attached to the Church School and in 1912 the Sisters moved into these and began the daily rounds of a Sister of Mercy. Two years later a desirable property was purchased and on it was built the present convent and St. Patrick's Parochial School. The Sisters also have charge of a High School under the patronage of St. Catherine. In answer to the claim made by sorrowing, suffering humanity the Kilbirnie Sisters for many years visited regularly the Women's prison at Point Halswell. The same visitation is now the monopoly of the Seatoun Sisters who are more conveniently situated for it.

Northlands, Karori and Marton, 1910-1917:

Sisters from Hill Street travel daily by tramcar to the parochial schools in Northlands and Karori. At Marton they have a branch convent and large primary schools for boys and girls. Every week the Sisters drive from Marton to Hunterville and Bulls, there to teach music and to instruct
children who are as yet unable to attend Catholic Schools. 

Picton, 1914:

Up to 1914 the Catholic children of Picton travelled eighteen miles to Blenheim convent school, but on August 4th that year, the Sisters had the happiness of establishing a branch convent in Picton. The absence of a school, however, necessitated their teaching in the church until at length in 1924 His Grace, Archbishop Redwood, blessed and opened the present parish school.

Nai Nai; the Beautiful 1916-1917:

Well back from the main road at the foothills of Lower Hutt, Nai Nai provides yet another sphere of activity for the Sisters of Mercy. For picturesque scenery St. Thomas’s Home stands second to none in New Zealand. Grounds beautifully set out according to Old World patterns, display a profusion of Nature’s wealth - fresh-looking bush, brighter toned ferns and fronds; a whispering brook flows beneath rustic bridges surmounted by Old World Statues; rockeries and neat drives and perhaps dearest of all, the lazy swans that glide up and down the slow-moving waters. This beautiful home belonged to the late John Dutchie and was purchased for the Sisters of Mercy in 1917. Boys come to Nai Nai from all parts of the Dominion, they are taken from five years of age and may be kept until they have passed Standard V1. The fees are sufficiently low to bring Nai Nai
within the reach of the working class and, in necessitous cases, boys are taken without fees, provision for them being obtained through an annual church collection and through a donation from the T.G.McCarthy Fund. St. Thomas's is particularly suitable for delicate boys, who after the first two months of its bracing air, its football, swimming, cricket, boxing and gardening, feel the full vigour of boyhood coursing through their veins.

Hataitai and Holy Cross, 1930:

Mount Carmel, an up-to-date primary school at Hataitai, was opened by the Sisters in 1930 and is supplied with Sisters from Hill Street who travel thence by tramcar every day. The thickly peopled district of Miramar has its convent school, Holy Cross, in which four Sisters from Seatoun teach one-hundred and forty-three pupils.

Other Foundations, 1936:

In 1936 the Sisters from Hill Street opened a branch convent near the parish school in Aro Street to provide a convenient residence for the staffs attending the Aro Street and Brooklyn Schools. A house in Rakaia Bay was purchased this year also, to serve as a convent for the Sisters who teach, already, nearly a hundred pupils in San Antonio, the old building in which Mass was celebrated until the building of the present church.
An Amalgamation:

(1) "Under the rule, originally established by the foundress, a Convent of Mercy was an independent House, electing its own Superior and training its own novices. In more recent years, however, the need for centralisation in government for religious communities, especially in the equipment of the novitiate has made itself felt, with the result that in some countries the Sisters of Mercy, who are under Papal jurisdiction, have been organised into a generalate, whilst in others, their convents have been grouped together within a diocese under one Superior, with a Common novitiate, as the first step, it is hoped, of reorganisation covering a wider area." Thus in 1927 His Grace, Archbishop, Redwood, desirous of placing all the Convents of Mercy in the Archdiocese under one Superior, amalgamated the Reefon, Westport and Gravity Convents with St. Mary's, Hill Street, under the present, Mother M. Francis Doyle as Superior General of the amalgamated Communities. It may be mentioned here that this keen enthusiast in recognition of her services in the interests of Education, received a Coronation Medal, June 1937 from their Majesties the King and Queen.

Reefton, 1881:

(2) "Quartz reefs discovered at Murray's Creek some sixty-

five years ago made Reefton's name and fame." In 1875 Rev. Father Cummings, S.M., erected a church and school, and after lay teachers had taught the children for twelve years, the question of religious teachers was considered.

Rev. Father Rolland, finding that Hokitika was unable to supply him with Sisters of Mercy, successfully appealed to the foundress of Singleton, Mother Stanislaus Kenny, who not only gave up four of her Sisters but even accompanied them on their arduous journey, first across the Tasman and thence to Wellington, Greymouth, Hokitika, across the Teremakau by aerial tramway, and by coach as far as the railway terminus where they boarded the train for Reefton. The Sisters found a girls' school awaited them with some hundred and forty on roll; they added a High School which opened with 30 pupils and almost at once began the work of visitation of the sick. The Sisters visited Boatmen regularly to instruct the children in their religion.(1) A school was opened in 1893 at Ikamatua, a little farming settlement in the Grey Valley, and was attended by an average of about forty children not all of whom were Catholics. It was a grateful work and though it meant that the Sisters had to leave Reefton at 7:30 a.m. and return at 8: p.m. they did not grudge the sacrifice. However, a greater sacrifice was still to be made, for one of the two Sisters

who travelled daily to Ikamatua (1) returned alone one night half-drowned and covered with blood, her companion having been the victim of a fatal road accident.

Westport, 1894:

This town received its pioneer Sisters of Mercy from Reefton which gave the (2) late Monsignor Walsh seven Sisters who, on February 3rd, made their home in Westport. Almost immediately they took charge of St. Canice's School and opened a secondary school in which pupils were prepared for the public examinations. In 1895 St. Canice's School was granted Government inspection. By 1904 the old convent and Schools were unsuitable for further use by the increased numbers of teachers and pupils so a new convent and Schools were built in Queen Street where later, St. Joseph's School was opened in 1931. The secondary college, St. Mary's, during the first twenty years admitted girls only, but in later years large classes of boys also, have completed their secondary education at St. Mary's. In 1931 we find that there were sixteen boys out of a total of fifty pupils. Extra classes are held for ambitious clerical workers who, having secured positions, are still desirous of pursuing their studies under the Sisters' direction. In 1914 the Sisters opened an out school in Granity and in 1921, when free railway tickets were withdrawn, a convent was established in the township.

In (1) 1912 the O'Conor Home for the Aged was opened in accordance with the will of the late Eugene O'Conor, Esq., and has been conducted by the Sisters of Westport since then. The present number of inmates is twenty-nine. During the influenza epidemic of 1918 the Sisters offered the authorities one of the dormitories as a ward for out-side patients, and for weeks they nursed all who were sent to them. Four of the Sisters nursed in the public homes. The total number of pupils attending the Westport Sisters' Schools last year (1938) was as follows:—St. Canice's 80; St. Joseph's 106; Granity 53; St. Mary's College 48; making a total of 287. In the year that followed its foundation Westport's need exceeded that of its parent, Reefton, accordingly the Mother House and Novitiate were transferred from Reefton to Westport and, after amalgamation in 1927, to Wellington.

The little band of three who left Auckland to found the first convent in Wellington has indeed increased and multiplied until at the present time the amalgamated Communities of the Archdiocese number slightly over two hundred while the number of children taught in their schools approximates to four hundred out of a (2) Catholic Population of 66,714 according to Government Census of 1926.
CHAPTER V.

HOKITIKA: FOUNDATIONS OF SOUTH ISLAND.

Almost eighty years ago, in 1860, the provident, far-seeing John Mackay, for (1) £300 purchased the excessively disproportionate area of the province of Westland according to present day values. Soon afterwards that irresistible magnet - gold - allured thither floods of cosmopolitan diggers of every walk of life who surged through Hokitika and converted it from an unimportant township into one of the leading ports of the colony. By the end of 1864, the population had risen from (2) 100 to 50,000, many of whom were Irish Catholics anxious in their new homes to secure the ministrations of a priest. To supply their need Rev. Father Stephen Hallum was appointed first priest for the West Coast and was duly succeeded by a chain of self-sacrificing men, mostly Marist Fathers, who exhibited intrepid constancy in their service of both God and man.

We find, as a strong link in this chain, Rev. Philip Martin, S.M., who, born in the South of France in 1830, in due time became a Marist Father and volunteered for the Australasian Mission. After rendering valuable service in Nelson, Dunedin and Invercargill, Father Martin was sent to take charge of the Hokitika parish in 1863. Here his generous,

1. "Zealandia": October 13th, 1938, (not signed.)
2. Harist Messenger. March 1938. (Editor.)
frank, unreserved though prudently guarded manner quickly won him the esteem and affection of the parishioners who were frankly proud of having a priest in their midst. A man of untiring energy Father Martin projected and accomplished many works of zeal, and his unselfish devotion to the interests of souls led him to spare neither fatigue nor anxiety in the shepherding of his numerous flock.

Shortly after his appointment to the parish, schools were opened in which (1) a Mr. Carrick taught the boys and a Miss Jones took charge of the girls. However, Father Martin had set his heart on securing for his parish the services of a religious community, and knowing the work that the Sisters of Mercy were doing in Auckland and Wellington, he petitioned Bishop Redwood to obtain a community of Sisters of Mercy for Hokitika. The Bishop handed on the request to Mother Cecilia Benbow then about to embark for Europe in search of additional subjects for the Wellington foundations. In every convent the personality of the Superioress counts and at the time of Mother M. Cecilia Benbow's visit, there was in charge of the Convent of Mercy, Ennis, Co. Clare, Ireland, a big-hearted, large-souled woman, Mother M. Vincent McMahon, who realised the immense value of missionary labours in a new land. With (2) characteristic generosity she selected eight from among volunteers in her

1. Marist Messenger, November 1934, (not signed.)
2. Hokitika Records.
own Community to form the nucleus of the Hokitika foundation. The eight Sisters selected were:
Mother M. Clare Molony, Superioress of the band, S.M. Mechtildes Boland, S.M. Gabriel Kennedy, S.M. Cecilia Sheehan, S.M. Juliana Ryan, S.M. Claver Ryan, S.M. Aloysius McGrath, Sister Angela O'Keefe and two postulants. This little group of ten left London for Melbourne via the Cape of Good Hope, on the steamer "Garonne" on July 23rd, 1878. After a short break at Melbourne the Sisters proceeded to Wellington where they were warmly received by Bishop Redwood and (1) the Hon. T.A. Bonar then Superintendent of Westland. From Wellington on board the "Tararua" they enjoyed the company of Mr. Bonar with whom they established a friendship which was to end only with his death. "Never once" records Mother M. Clare, "did this great West Coaster fail to call at the Convent on Christmas Day to express his good-will on the festive season."

(2) At mid-day on October 15th, 1878 the "Tararua" appeared off Port Hokitika. Its appearance was a signal for universal rejoicing equalled by the ardency with which the entire town population had prepared for the coming of the nuns. Their actual landing is described by Mother M. Clare as follows:

2. Ibid.
amidst the acclamations of the people, who had assembled in vast numbers at the wharf to meet them, the Sisters arrived at Hokitika. Mr. Matthew Cleary, the Governor of Hokitika gaol, and Mr. Edward A. Burke accompanied them ashore, having gone out to welcome them on behalf of the Catholic parishioners, Rev. Philip A. Martin, the first pastor, was the first to meet them and welcome them formally to the land of their adoption. He then conducted them to the carriages in waiting, which drove off rapidly through the town to their temporary residence, a charming cottage of eight rooms, with garden and paddock.

The fine convent which had been erected for them on the corner of Sewell and Stafford Streets was not then quite ready for occupancy, the Sisters took up residence in the house in Stafford Street, in which the Hon. H. L. Michel and members of his family afterwards dwelt. On October 28th, the Sisters took charge of the girls' school which had been conducted by a succession (2) of three lay teachers - Miss Jones, Miss Anne Brogan (later to become Mrs. McKeever) and Miss Elanche Stevens who handed over the charge to the Sisters. "The attendance was 105 and the children in general were very intelligent" - Such was Mother Clare's first report of their new pupils. January 14th, 1879 though a dull, wet day from the weather point of view, was for the Sisters, a day of great rejoicing; for on that day they moved into their new convent called St. Columbkille's. "The Rea" as their pastor was familiarly called by his parishioners, had suitably furnished it and provided all the little comforts which he thought the Sisters might have been

---

accustomed in their loved Ennis convent. Not many pioneer religious facing life in a new country have had such an encouraging and generous friend. With the solicitude of a fond parent, he freed them from the possibility of financial worries by providing them with means sufficient to cover their expenditure for over a year. January 20th, 1879 saw the Sisters resume teaching, not only in the primary school of long standing but also in a select school later to become the present High School. By (1) February the roll numbers had increased to 184 and included six music pupils. In the following March, Bishop Redwood visited Hokitika and performed the first solemn religious ceremony - the Reception to the Religious Life of Sister M. Patrick and Sister M. Columba, the two postulants who had accompanied the eight professed Sisters from Ennis. Before he returned to Wellington the Bishop administered the Sacrament of Confirmation (2) to forty children, and on two consecutive days, visited the schools and expressed himself as well-pleased with the spiritual, intellectual and cultural progress already manifest in the children. On Easter Monday, 1880, St. Columbkille's accepted its first postulant who was soon followed by so many others that two years later the Sisters were able to comply with Bishop Redwood's request to open a convent in Greymouth, then a promising seaport.

1. "Zealandia" October 20th, 1888, (unsigned.)
2. Ibid.
Within the following five years schools were opened at Kanieri and Rimu and to these the Sisters travelled daily. In (1) 1888 the Right Rev. J.J. Grimes, S.M. established the diocese of Christchurch in which was incorporated the West Coast which until then had been administered from Wellington. Two months after his consecration Dr. Grimes paid his first episcopal visit to Hokitika where he was enthusiastically received by the parishioners. He visited the schools, was fully satisfied with the proficiency of the pupils and confirmed sixty-five in St. Mary's Church, which for the occasion was constrained into holding, but by no means accommodating, eight hundred people. During the visit to Hokitika Dr. Grimes suggested that the Sisters should open a branch Convent, at Ross and (2) in May 1889, St. Patrick's Convent, Ross was established with a hundred and twenty children in the schools. St. Mary's, the first Boarding School on the West Coast, was also opened in 1889 and enrolled pupils from many parts of Westland. St. Bridget's, Kumara was also opened that year and soon as many as one hundred and fifty pupils were in attendance. The following year saw a little band of three Sisters leave Hokitika and cross the Alps to open a convent in Lyttelton.

The Sisters had now worked for twelve years among the people of Westland with many of whom they had become

1. "Zealandia" October 13th. 1933.
acquainted while visiting the sick, the poor and the imprisoned. To many a heart sore-distressed they brought the balm of cheerful resignation while to more than one God-fleeing spirit they helped to disclose the secret of his discontent showing him how - "Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue." Throughout the period of expansion Mother H. Clare continued to fill the office of Mother Superior and in 1892 she retired from that responsible position.

The full extent of her work for Catholic education in Westland will never be realised. For over forty years she was actively engaged in the interests of education among the children and youth of the West Coast. Blessed with that rarest of rare gifts - a clear accurate mind - she possessed a cheerful, alert nature which had the power of exciting effort and arousing ideal in others, while her extraordinary range and depth of knowledge, and the amazing clarity and charm of her exposition, earned for her a unique reputation as a teacher. She never missed an opportunity of pouring her own great love of scholarship and achievement into the hearts of the young. A pupil of hers in the 'eighties', writes:

(1) "Only we who were privileged to sit in her classes, or those who had the honour of living with her, could realise the spirituality, the deep learning, the simplicity and sincere understanding of this woman of principle. Her knowledge of the classics, her love of history in all its branches and, above all, her absolute joy in unfolding the

beauties of the Faith, of Scripture and of the Liturgy, made her a rare teacher for always: she combined with love of knowledge a love of her pupils."

Second only to her great love of God came her ardent love of her native land, and though she eschewed controversy of all kinds, yet, when occasion demanded it, she could launch a crushing rejoinder barbed with a polite irony altogether disarming. For the Maoris she had a very special love and her strong simplicity gave her an empire over them which no diplomacy could have helped her to acquire. They, as well as their white neighbours, sought her counsel and sympathy in times of trouble, knowing full well that her friendship knew no hesitations, no chills, no wearying.

Great was the mourning at the Arahaura pa when on October 20th, 1931 they heard of her death. In the message of sympathy which these Maoris sent to the Hokitika Sisters, and which the Sisters fondly cherish, we read - "The rata flower has fallen at last and we grieve for her." And the flaming rata, kindling the hillside with the blaze of its glory, is indeed a fitting symbol of her glowing charity, some sparks of which inflamed the hearts of many who were so fortunate as to come under the spell of her influence.

Of the original band of ten pioneer Sisters who began the works of the Institute of Mercy in the South Island sixty-one years ago, five are not only still alive, but still mentally alert, though wont to view with yearning gaze
the progressive course of life's day-star, now, for them, nearing the western horizon.

Greymouth, 1882:

In 1870 Rev. Father Colomb, S.M. built the first Catholic School in Greymouth on a site (1) later purchased by the Government for harbour requirements. In 1882 at the request of Bishop Redwood the Hokitika Community sent a foundation to open a Branch Convent in Greymouth. In those early days the journey from Hokitika to Greymouth was both tedious and dangerous. Short as was the actual distance it had to be covered in successive stages, the first of which was the horse-tram journey as far as Kumara at a speed averaging slightly more than four miles an hour. Then followed the feat of crossing the Teremakau by what was stylishly called "aerial tramway." (2) This consisted of an old roof-iron cage suspended by wires and propelled by an asthmatic engine, which when it was in the mood for movement, chugged its way across, barely clearing the water whenever the river was in flood. The remaining eighteen miles of journey were made by Coach from which the traveller alighted weary but with a sense of triumph on having at last reached Journey's End. The Sisters realised that as long as Greymouth remained a Branch Convent, travelling between the two towns would be a frequent

necessity and now that they had tasted the joys of such travelling, they decided to relinquish them by constituting Greymouth foundation an independent Convent before the end of the year 1882. At once the Sisters of this new foundation opened a primary school for girls, and for boys up to Standard 1, as well as a high school with both primary and secondary departments. The present St. Mary's High School, Alexander Street, dates back to those early days and holds an admirable record of annual successes in scholastic and music circles. Out-schools were opened at Brunnerston, Cobden and Runanga making a total of 445 Catholic children who are taught by the Greymouth Sisters. Lyttelton, 1890:

(1) In 1863 Sir Frederick Weld then Prime Minister of New Zealand, out of his own bounty presented the Catholics of Lyttelton with a strip of ground for the erection of a Church. St. Joseph's Church, now the oldest Church in the diocese of Christchurch, and the oldest stone Church in N.Z. was built in 1865 and the school erected then was staffed with lay teachers until 1890 when three Sisters of Mercy arrived from Hokitika to take charge of the parish school. On account of the difficulties of travel in those days, the Lyttelton Convent from the beginning was made an independent house with the right of self-government and its

consequence - self-support. From small beginnings in a house formerly owned by Captain Gibson in Exeter Street, the Sisters pressed onward with great endurance under the leadership of Mother M. Aloysius McGrath, one of the original band of pioneers from Ennis. Their new mission was not one to fire the blood - it demanded constant sacrifice and only after years of suffering and struggling did they triumph. Their perseverance was in large measure due to the inspiring example of Mother M. Aloysius whose ever-increasing self-restraint moved forward progressively with a daily enlarged indulgence for the weakness of others. She was an able and well-balanced guide whose earnest spirit, combined with an aptitude for organisation, preserved her from discouragement and infused additional vigour into those among whom she worked. Organising and superintending everything with a skill, presence of mind and cheeriness which endeared her to all, this zealous woman laboured on, knowing well that in His own time God would give 'the increase'. (1) In 1902 much needed improvements were effected in the Convent and a new school was built. Four years previously Lyttelton sent four Sisters to open a Branch Convent in Akaroa and again, in 1912 and 1913, similar Convents were opened in Rakaia and Methven respectively. In 1934 the present artistically-constructed

1. Lyttelton Records, unpublished.
building was erected on the site of the old convent.

St. Mary's High School and St. Joseph's School are the only Catholic Schools in Lyttelton, so in these the Sisters teach both girls and boys. The present total number of pupils is ninety-two. Besides teaching, the Sisters sedulously attend to visitation of the sick and the distressed, as well as the imprisoned. Their influence over the inmates of the gaol may best be exemplified by recalling the transformation which they were instrumental in effecting in the dispositions of (1) William Sheehan, who was found guilty of the murder of a young woman and condemned to death by hanging on June 16th, 1897. This unfortunate man was recalcitrant from childhood, spent some time in Stoke Orphanage and at the age of twenty-six was already scared with crime. Hearing that in infancy he had been baptized a Catholic, the Sisters endeavoured to awaken in him trust in the Mercy of God. Great as was their zeal for his repentance it was no greater than the sullen gloom which steadily enveloped him to the exclusion of any impress from outside influence. The priest, the Sisters and the people of Lyttelton stormed heaven with prayer that this poor man might die reconciled to his God. Undaunted by frequent repulsion Mother M. Aloysius again strove to make him seek forgiveness for his crime and had the great

1. Ashburton Police Gazette 1897.
happiness of getting him to pray. She taught him how to say the Rosary and in a short time this hardened sinner had become a model penitent. He asked the mother of the girl whose life he had taken to forgive him; he thanked the people of Lyttelton who had prayed for him, and he faced and met the death he had deserved, with such admirable dispositions that those who witnessed the sad spectacle realised the force of Tennyson's claim that—

"More things are wrought by prayer

Than this world dreams of."

Mother M. Aloysius is still a member of the Lyttelton Community and though life's vespers have come, lit by a slanting sun, still her reminiscences of those early days are clear and vivid as of old.

St. Mary's Convent, Christchurch 1894:

The Greymouth foundation prospered so well that on July 25th, 1894 it was strong enough to give a band of Sisters to St. Mary's parish, Christchurch which had been established by the persevering (1) efforts of Rev. Father Le Menant des Chesnais, S.M. and his curate Rev. Father Karmame, S.M. Five Sisters of Mercy and a postulant crossed the Alps and on August 1894 took charge of the parish school, St. Mary's, a fine brick building situated behind the Church and separated from it by the play-ground. At first the Sisters occupied a

1. The Cyclopedia of N.Z. Vol. 3 (Ch.Ch. 1903.)
house at the corner of Manchester and Salisbury Streets but in the following November they purchased a three-quarter of an acre site on which were two adjacent houses facing Colombo Street. These houses for many years served as St. Mary’s Convent until it became necessary to secure better facilities in housing accommodation. In 1900 the present convent chapel so skilfully executed in grey stone was erected as the first of that imposing group of buildings known as St. Mary’s, Colombo Street which includes St. Mary’s Collegiate High School built in 1912; the Convent erected in 1918 and the Music Block erected in 1923. In Manchester Street Schools the Sisters teach at present 290 pupils while the attendance at St. Mary’s Collegiate High School is 222 including 39 boys. Here as in the other Secondary Schools conducted by the Sisters, pupils are presented annually for the public examinations in which their success testifies to the efficiency of the teaching.

Education has not, however, overshadowed the other activities on behalf of the neighbour. The Sisters visit the sick and poor in their homes and in hospital, and by their unostentatious charity bring relief to those who are too crushed to let their want become known to public charities. Mother H. Nechtildes Boland, as first Superioress, guided the working of St. Mary’s Convent for many years. A pioneer, who had begun her life as a Sister of Mercy in Ennis and who
had filled the office of Assistant in the Hokitika Convent until she was sent in charge of Greymouth foundation in 1832, she continued to diffuse the gracious spirit of their holy foundress - Mother Catherine McAuley - until her sudden death in 1928, while she was on a visit to Greymouth. Here as in the other independent foundations a Novitiate was formed which admitted several subjects from over-seas as well as from Australia and New Zealand.

In Darfield they opened a Branch Convent in which reside the sisters who teach in the parish school which at present gathers in thirty-six pupils from the surrounding district. The sisters also opened an out-school, St. Joseph's, in Papanui, to which they travelled daily by tramcar until Loreto College was established on the route to Papanui in 1929, 1930.

"Villa Maria" Upper Riccarton, 1918:

By the year 1918 such progress had been made in the sphere of transport in New Zealand that there was no longer any great reason why the Convents of Mercy in the Christchurch Diocese should remain dissociated. Consequently, in that year, a Mother House with a central novitiate was established at "Villa Maria" a beautiful private residence which the Sisters of Mercy of the combined convents purchased from Mr. Joseph of Upper Riccarton. Here again we find one of the pioneer band - Mother M. Claver - acting as Superioress and with marked executive ability governing the
Amalgamation until ill-health supervened in 1921. A Boarding School for girls was built adjoining the Convent and a splendid gymnasium was added later. The Sisters who live at "Villa Maria" have charge of the High School with both primary and secondary departments; the parish school, and the new kindergarten school in Puiriri Street; opened in 1937.

In 1930 a boys' junior college was opened in Windermere Road, Papanui under the title, Loreto College and here the Sisters conduct a flourishing boarding and day school for boys in the primary grades. The year 1936 saw the transfer of the Mother House and novitiate from "Villa Maria" to Timaru where the Sisters had purchased a grand old Convent and property from the Sisters of the Sacred Heart Order who were desirous of giving their services in other Houses of their Order where help was needed.

Convent of Mercy, Timaru, 1936:

In 1936 Rev. Mother M. Agatha McDonnell, Superioress of the Amalgamated Convents of Mercy in the Christchurch diocese, took up residence in what had been the Sacred Heart Convent, Craigie Avenue, Timaru. Here with the novitiate and a staff of Sisters selected from the various Convents, she initiated the works of the Mercy Order. She brought to her task a highly cultivated intellect, a re-
markable spirit of trustful abandonment to God's guiding providence and, above all, a charity that compelled her to remember only the virtues of those who came within her influence. Her deeply regretted death within the first six months of her settling in Timaru deprived the Sisterhood of a valued Superior whose very presence was an inspiration and a stepping-stone to higher things. Sacred Heart Girls' College which is both boarding and day school has at present 120 pupils and Sacred Heart School adjoining the Convent property has an attendance of 210. This year (1939) the Sisters took charge of St. Joseph's School, in the North End of the parish, and have at present a roll of 53 pupils.

Thus has spread the seed sown by the little band of pioneer Sisters of Mercy who arrived in Hokitika in 1878 and gave the South Island its first religious community of women. They sowed the seed, the people tilled the ground, but God gave the increase.
When the Right Rev. Dr. Moran was transferred in 1870 from Grahamstown, South Africa to the new See of Dunedin, he secured a foundation of Dominican Sisters from Sion Hill, Dublin with whose assistance he opened the first Catholic primary school in the diocese on February 20th, 1871 and a High school a week later. The education of the girls of Dunedin remained in the capable hands of these industrious nuns until 1897. In the May of 1896 His Lordship, Bishop Verdon, was consecrated Bishop of Dunedin where he saw the need of establishing an Order, the members of which would carry out visitation of the sick poor in their homes as well as in hospitals, and would take care of orphans. With this object in view he appealed to Rev. Mother K. Stanislaus Kenny who was then Superioress of the Convent of Mercy, Singleton, N.S.W. and obtained from her already depleted Community a group to lay the foundations of the Order in Dunedin. This infant Community under the leadership of Mother K. Kostka Kirby, landed at Port Chalmers on Sunday, January 17th, 1897, and were welcomed to their future home by His Lordship, Bishop Verdon and the priests of the City. For three days the Sisters were the guests of the hospitable Dominican Sisters who bestowed on them every conceivable
Kindness, until their own Convent was ready for habitation. Well-trained in the duties of their Order, the Sisters were soon busily engaged in the schools, and on the visitation, so that within the first week, their days had already begun to teem with activity.

Subjects from Home with the addition of many Australian and New Zealand candidates so enlarged the Community that the Novitiate accommodation was taxed to its utmost capacity. Expansion began and soon the network of Branch Convents spread throughout Otago Province.

Gore, 1897:

In July of this year six Sisters of Mercy who had opened a small house in Gore in 1870 amalgamated with the Dunedin Sisters and thus widened their sphere of influence. At this centre the Sisters now conduct a large primary school of about 300 pupils, a secondary school and a flourishing School of Music.

St. Philomena's College, 1897-1904:

This South Dunedin secondary school was opened by Mother M.Kostka in August 1897 as a day school. A Boarding School was added in 1904 and its annual successes in the public examinations have placed it among the leading educational establishments of the province of Otago. The present number of pupils, including the primary department, is 200. St.Patrick's Primary School in South Dunedin has
a daily attendance of 215.

Mosegiel, 1898:

In this Seminary town the Sisters of Mercy in May 1898 opened their first school to which they travelled daily by train from Dunedin. The train service did not prove satisfactory for their work so it was decided to establish a Convent of Mercy in the town. From 1898 until 1912 the children were taught in the Church but in 1912, Rev. Fr. Liston then Parish Priest, (1) purchased from the Mosegiel Borough Council a building which was readily converted into an admirable school. The number of pupils at present in attendance at Mosegiel Convent School is 60.

St. Vincent's Orphanage, 1898:

The foundation stone of this charitable institution was laid a few months after the Sisters arrived in Dunedin and received the first little orphan girls in July 1898. Here orphan girls are received even in infancy and are looked after with such tender solicitude that many of them, in later life, cherish their memories of St. Vincent's as the happiest of their lives. These girls are carefully educated according to the principles of the Catholic Church which believes in sending the whole child to school - the heart as well as the mind - so that she acquires "a taste for doing good", a taste for right living.

Children with special aptitudes, as well as those with special disabilities, are treated apart and prepared to fill, in later life, the positions for which they are best suited. At present the Sisters have sixty-two orphans in St. Vincent's.

Winton, 1898:

Rev. P. O'Neill, parish priest of Winton applied in 1898 to the Superioress of the Convent of Mercy, Dunedin for a Community of Sisters for his parish. It has always been the aim of the Sisters of Mercy to supply, to the best of their ability, Catholic Schools for the smaller parishes in each diocese, so the request to provide Winton with a Community was readily granted. On the feast of St. Bernard, August 20th, 1898, three Sisters opened St. Bernard's Convent, Winton. From this centre, Sisters go to the outlying districts to teach Christian Doctrine.

Wrey's Bush, 1899:

This settlement was almost entirely Catholic in 1899 and for some years the children had been attending the public school. That year, on the Feast of St. Joseph, March 19th, the Sisters opened a Convent and school here and the public school automatically closed.

Alexandra, 1912:

At the request of Rev. Father Hunt of Alexandra, Central Otago, the Sisters of Mercy from South Dunedin
opened there a convent and school, in which there are at present three Sisters and seventy-two children respectively. In Alexandra the Sisters find much scope for carrying out the other works of their Institute.

**Riverton, 1913:**

When the Rev. P. Murphy was appointed to the very large district known as the Riverton parish, he found that there was no Catholic school within a radius of twenty-three miles. Immediately he set about providing a means of religious instruction for the children and obtained from the Mother House, Dunedin, a Community of five Sisters of Mercy who opened a Convent and school in Riverton. Children from the various settlements, Tewaewae, Orepuki, Tikaka, Otautau, Thornbury, Fairfox, Flint's Bush and other smaller districts journey daily by train to Riverton Convent School.

**Nightcaps, 1916:**

The Sisters from Wrey's Bush opened, in 1916, a school in the coal-mining township of Nightcaps, five miles distant, and travelled thither daily until 1936. By that year the school at Wrey's Bush had fallen to a roll number of seven while that at Nightcaps had risen to eighty. Consequently the Sisters closed the Convent at Wrey's Bush and opened one at Nightcaps where they now reside. The present number of children is ninety.
Hornington, 1919:

At this little township in the suburbs of Dunedin the Sisters, at the request of His Lordship, Bishop Verdon, opened a Convent and School in 1919.

Waverley Boys' Orphanage, 1920:

In 1916 it became necessary to admit small boys to St. Vincent's Girls' Orphanage but as these proved to be too great a tax on existing accommodation the Sisters sought a suitable property on which to open an orphanage for boys. In 1920 a beautiful home at Waverley, till then occupied by the late Mr. Scobie McKenzie, was purchased by Messrs. Andrew and Henry Hagerty and presented to the Dunedin Sisters of Mercy. Here St. Joseph's Boys' Home was established and the present new building was added by the generosity of Rev. Father James Lynch of Wrey's Bush and Dean McMullan of Ranfurly. At present the Home is taxed to capacity and the Sisters hope to add to the institution in the near future. The Waverley Boys' Band is a popular feature of the Home and is ably conducted by Mr. Whelan. The people of Dunedin provide an annual outing for the Waverley Boys and more than one charitable citizen has, from time to time, supplied every boy in the Home with boots, overcoat or suit of clothes. Five Sisters attend to the religious, moral and intellectual training of the boys and with noble purpose and high endeavour
are moving forward constantly to a higher efficiency in their management. The boys are healthy and happy, they have acquired habits of labour and steady industry, are keen in the field of sport and evince filial respect for the Sisters.

**Later Lisericordiae Hospital, 1936:**

As care of the sick is one of the special works of the Order of Mercy the Sisters are always glad of an opportunity to open a hospital. The need of a hospital conducted by nuns was a long-felt want in the diocese of Dunedin so there was great joy among the Catholic citizens when in February 1936 the Sisters of Mercy opened the Later Lisericordiae. For some years previously the Sisters selected for nursing had undergone training in Auckland and the Superior, and Foundress of the hospital, did everything possible to fit the Sisters for their new work. The Hospital is a fine brick building on a site of one and a half acres in Royal Terrace, Dunedin, and has at present a personnel of eight sisters and a capacity of twenty-one beds. Though these beginnings are relatively small, yet the Dunedin Later Lisericordiae gives promise of prolific growth such as has attended its name sake in Auckland.

In Otago, as elsewhere, the Sisters of Mercy have established various Sodalities and Confraternities which tend towards the uplifting of the young women of the
diocese. Mercy guilds teach the almsgiver how to bestow her alms, how to see in the poor recipient of her charity, one sent by God to test her justice and to enable her to hear from Justice Himself:

"Because you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it unto me."
CHAPTER V11.

CONCLUSION.

Coincident with the establishment in New Zealand of the works of the Order of Mercy there proceeded the daily perfecting of the religious life in each Community.

The fire kindled in those pioneering days by valiant women has been steadily fanned into "ever quickening life" as is now attested by the 473 New Zealand Sisters of Mercy who, vivified by the same disinterested spirit, have bound themselves unreservedly to the service of God, and of man, by the three vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. The Order has ever been remarkable for its unflagging attention to the needs of those whom it serves, and for the alacrity with which it responds to local needs.

If Rev. W. Lockington S.J. is correct in stating that (1) "Foremost among the builders of our nation stands the Catholic nun" then the Sisters of Mercy are among the builders of this nation. (2) "For more than thirty years, they were the only nuns in Auckland, sharing in an intimate way the lives of the lonely Irish and other exiles and digging deeply the foundations of the Church in Auckland." Their schools, homes, orphanages, hospitals, open alike to Catholics and Non-Catholics, bear unerring testimony to the service that the Order of Mercy renders here in New Zealand,

not only to the Catholic section, but to the Community in general. These nuns are at present the educators of
(1) 8,944 young New Zealanders; they mother the orphan; they are the guardians of the aged; the healers of the sick; the comforters of the infirm and incurable. Though the Order was specifically founded for "the service of the poor, sick and ignorant," yet Sisters are engaged in all departments of educational as of hospital work. The greater number spend, in general, five days a-week in school or music-room and the remaining two, in carrying out some of the other works of their Institute. The young Sisters undergo, during their novitiate, a period of training in the principles and methods of teaching. Later they sit for Teachers' Certificates and some for University degrees. Music in all its branches is a speciality with the Sisters of Mercy, many of whom pursue their studies in Elocution, Singing and Instrumental Music as far as the awards of Licentiate and Fellowship by the two London Schools of Music - The Royal Academy and Trinity College.

With their advent to New Zealand in 1850 the Sisters of Mercy completed the chain of mercy with which, in 1838, Mother McAuley unknowingly began to span the entire earth. She lived to guide her Order for only ten, very full years

and under the rule she then established to suit the exigencies of the time, each Convent of Mercy was an independent House, electing its own Superior and training its own novices. With the expansion of the Order the need for centralisation in government has made itself felt especially in consideration of the novitiate training, and as a step towards remedying this want, the Convents of Mercy in New Zealand have been grouped together within each diocese under one Superioress and with a common novitiate. Had Mother McAuley with her practical common sense lived to see the world-wide expansion of the Order, she would have been one of the first to discern the advisability of securing the unification of the Order; which unification is the ardent hope, if not also the fervent prayer, of the vast majority of her 20,462 Sisters scattered throughout the world.