

LETTERS OF NANO NAGLE

LETTER I

TO MISS FITZSIMONS, 17 JULY 1769 ¹

[1]

As it is always a real pleasure to me to hear from you, I am much obliged to you for both your kind favours; in the first there was enclosed your note. I can't help saying that if I could be jealous at anything you did in my regard, it would be at [your] not writing in a more friendly manner; as, be assured, you may command anything in my power.

[2]

I cannot express how much I suffered on your account, as I was sure your uneasiness must be great, at not hearing of the arrival of the young ladies I mentioned. They were to depart in the first vessel that sailed to Havre. When I wrote I thought everything was settled. But it has pleased God to order things otherwise—which in all appearance has turned out a fortunate occurrence, for by the delay there are two subjects more such, as one might ambition in every respect. I shall say nothing of their merit as that will speak for itself. I am not acquainted with Miss Coppinger; I have seen her, but it is on the amiable character Mr. Doran gives her I depend. And I am afraid I shall not have the pleasure of seeing her again before she goes, as the measles is like a plague here. Though not mortal, yet it is dangerous to grown persons; and Mrs Coppinger told me it was the only disorder she dreaded, as her daughter is subject to a whizzing in her chest. She and her father are greatly pleased at her choice of a state of life, they are so pious.

I wish Mr. Shea was so well pleased at his daughter's inclination; he has not as yet given his consent. He says it is a sudden thought; he does not know it long, though she has been thinking of becoming a religious more than twelve months. She is a person of incomparable sense and very sedate and of an age to know her mind—she is past twenty—so it is not very probable she will change. I believe Mr. Moylan has so much influence over him he will prevail.

Miss Coppinger's parents won't let her go until her Aunt Butler approves of her resolution to which—by what you mention of her good intentions to this foundation—she will immediately give her consent. And it was thought proper not to press Mr. Shea for his consent, to show him she still persists to his knowledge longer than a few days as he at first imagined. She is their darling child; all this objection is to her going to France, for they are too good Christians to hinder her from being a nun. There is one comfort I have in these two young ladies, which is [that] they seem so much attached to their families they could not think of being anywhere but here.

[3]

I am sorry Miss Coppinger cannot see the schools, as I think no one can have an idea of their use unless an eye-witness. As you wish to have a particular account of them, I will tell you how I began. I fancy I mentioned to you before that it was an undertaking I thought I should never have the happiness of accomplishing. Nothing would have made me come home but the decision of the clergyman that I should run a great risk of salvation if I did not follow the inspiration. This made me accept of a very kind invitation of my sister-in-law to live with her.

[4]

When I arrived I kept my design a profound secret, as I knew, if it were spoken of, I should meet with opposition on every side, particularly from my immediate family as in all appearance they would suffer from it. My confessor was the only person I told of it; and as I could not appear in the affair, I sent my maid to get a good mistress and to take in thirty poor girls. When this little school was settled I used to steal there in the morning — my brother thought I was at the chapel. This passed on very well until one day a poor man came to him, begging of him to speak to me to take his child into my school. On which he came in to his wife and me, laughing at the conceit of a man who was mad and thought I was in the situation of a school-mistress. Then I owned [that] I had set up a school. On which he fell into a violent passion and said a vast deal on the bad consequences which may follow. His wife is very zealous, and so is he, but interest blinded him at first. He was soon reconciled to it. He was not the person I dreaded would be brought into trouble about it. It was my uncle Nagle, who is, I think, the most disliked

¹ Transcript in Ursuline Convent, Cork.

by the Protestants of any Catholic in the kingdom. I expected a great deal from him. When he heard it he was not angry at it; and in a little time they were so good as to contribute largely to support it.

[5]

And, by degrees, I took in the children, not to make a noise about it in the beginning. In about nine months I had 200 children. When the Catholics saw what service it did, they begged [that] I would set up schools at the other end of the town from those I had, for the convenience of the children, to be under my name and direction; and they promised to contribute to the support of them. With which request I readily complied; and the same number of children that I had were taken in; and at the death of my uncle I supported them all at my own expense.

[6]

I did not intend to take boys, but my sister-in-law made it a point, and said she would not permit any of my family to contribute to them [the schools] unless I did so. On which I got a master and took in only forty boys. They are in a house by themselves and have no communication with the others.

[7]

At present I have two schools for boys and five for girls. The former learn to read, and when they have the Douai Catechism by heart they learn to write and cypher. There are three schools where the girls learn to read, and when they have the catechism by heart they learn to work. They all hear Mass every day, say their morning and night prayers, say the Catechism in each school by question and answer all together. Every Saturday they all say the beads, the grown girls every evening. They go to Confession every month and to Communion when their Confessors think proper. The schools are opened at eight, at twelve the children go to dinner, at five o'clock they leave school. The workers do not begin their night prayers until six, after the beads.

[8]

I prepare a set for first Confession twice a year, and I may truly say it is the only thing that gives me any trouble. In the first place I think myself very incapable; and in the beginning—being obliged to speak for upwards of four hours and my chest not being as strong as it had been—I spat blood; which I took good care to conceal for fear of being prevented from instructing the poor. It has not the least bad effect now.

When I have done preparing them at each end of the town, I think myself like an idler that has nothing to do. Though I speak almost as much as when I prepare them for their first Communion, I find not the least difficulty in it. I explain the Catechism as well as I can in one school or other every day; and if everyone thought as little of labour as I do, they would have little merit. I often think my schools will never bring me to heaven, as I only take delight and pleasure in them.

[9]

You see it has pleased the Almighty to make me succeed, when I had everything, as I may say, to fight against. I assure you I did not expect a farthing from any mortal towards the support of my schools, and I thought I should not have more than fifty or sixty girls until I got a fortune; nor [did I think] should I have had a school in Cork. I began in a poor humble manner; and though it pleased the divine Will to give me severe trials in this foundation, yet it is to show that it is His work and has not been effected by human means.

[10]

And had I only a proper person to begin it, I think it has the prospect of meeting with surprising success. I am charmed with the account you give me of the ladies you are with, I hope the same spirit will be communicated here. I think religious discipline would be too strict for this country, and I own I should not rejoice to see it kept up. I must say Miss Moylan's prejudice to take on here has made me see things in a clearer light than I should have done, and makes me accept the disappointments I have met with as a decree of the divine bounty. All her friends are sorry she went abroad; and I must say, laying aside her own merit, this house would have a great loss in her, as she is of a family deservedly loved. They are in hopes she is beginning to change; I wish it may be so. If she has so much zeal, she will never have such an opportunity of exerting it as here.

[11]

For I can assure you my schools are beginning to be of service to a great many parts of the world—this is a place of such trade—they are heard of, and my views are not for one object alone. If I could be of any service in saving souls in any part of the globe, I would willingly do all in my power.

[12]

I must look on it as one of my crosses that the two ladies who were so good as to patronise this foundation should be removed. But the Almighty is all-sufficient and will soon make up this loss to us. I beg you will present them my compliments.

[13]

Mr. Moylan desires to be affectionately remembered to you. As he gave you an account of the building, I shall say nothing of it only to excuse myself as to the house I built first. I never intended it for ladies. At the time I was sure I should get the ground at the rear to build in; and as it gave on the street, I was obliged to have it in the manner it is, in order not to have it noticed as a convent. I shall refer you to that and many other things in my next which I hope the young ladies will be the bearer of.

LETTER II

TO MISS FITZSIMONS: EARLY IN 1770²

[1]

. . . as I always reflect on myself how many faults I have. How happy she was to have such a pious turn so early in life and to have let herself be directed by that great servant of God, your former mistress, who I long to know whether she will do that meritorious action as to settle this foundation. Her zeal is great. I am sure if she does it, she may be compared to the grain [of] mustard seed in the Gospel. Though our house is the least in the Order, has it in our power to do more good than any; and the good seed she will sow will spread, if she is inspired to it.

[2]

I am sending boys to the West Indies. Some charitable gentlemen put themselves to great expense for no other motive. Only as they are well instructed, and as the true faith is decaying very much there by reason of them that leave this country knowing nothing of their religion, [this] made them lay this scheme, which I hope may have the desired effect. All my children are brought up to be fond of instructing, as I think it lies in the power of the poor to be of [more] service that way than the rich. These children promise me they will take great pains with the little blacks to instruct them. Next year I will have pictures for them that go to give the negroes that learn the Catechism. I must beg you will be so good as to buy me some dozens of the common pictures of that sort for them.

[3]

I forgot to speak to Miss N. to send them to me by the first opportunity. I am glad she is liked by the ladies where she is. Had they known all she suffered for this foundation as well as I do, it would make them pass over many imperfections they may see in her. I am confident her intention is good; ignorance may make her err. I run no risk in giving directions about her to a person of your piety and sense, as you were confident [that] had I known the Fille[s] St Joseph were Jansenist[s], I should never have sent her there.

[4]

And I hope you'll act in regard of the young ladies as you think proper, and be sure I shall always approve of it. I must say I was desirous they would learn what was proper to teach young ladies, hereafter, as there is a general complaint both in this kingdom and in England that the children are taught only to say their prayers. As for spiritual matter, I am sure the nuns will take good care of that.

I must beg the favour of you to present my compliments to the Superior, [to] your mistress and [to] your former one; and my best wishes attend them and the young ladies.

[5]

Had I the happiness of being acquainted with you, I should imagine you were laughing at me, to think I fatigue myself in the least. I can assure you I never thought the least trouble in acting in regard of the schools, only in one part of my duty. Don't be uneasy about my health. Nobody can enjoy better health than I do, thank God. I must say

² Original in Ursuline Convent, Cork; beginning is missing; endorsed on back: Mademoiselle de Fitzsimons au Monastère des Dames Ursulines, rue St Jacques, Paris.

I suffered a great deal in mind, which for a time I thought would have hurt my constitution, [but it] did not in the least. I am afraid you all will be tired of me, I may live to be so old. That [is] what is most to be dreaded. I beg you'll believe me to be with the sincerest esteem, dear Miss, your most affectionate friend, Nano Nagle.

[P.S.] I wrote to Mr. Halloran about Miss Nagle and shall be guided by what I hear from him as he is so good a judge.

LETTER III

TO MISS FITZSIMONS: 29 APRIL 1770³

[1]

I had the pleasure of receiving your kind favour and hope my last letter has convinced you that it was no neglect on my part not answering .you sooner as nothing can give me more real pleasure than hearing often from you⁴, till I have that of seeing you. And that longed-for sight, I hope, is not at such a distance as I some time ago imagined it to be.

[2]

I can't too much admire your zeal and great trust in the divine Providence, which I always looked on as the most settled beginning any foundation of this kind could have. And I build more on the success of it from that poor way [in which] it first took its rise than any means it has pleased God to give me at present to carry it on. I can't express how much I suffer to think of all the severe trials you have gone through, and am sensible it's more painful to meet them where [you] should expect everything to forward such a good work. Yet the Almighty permits this to try your patience and to hasten this establishment, and to draw a future benefit from it, as the faults we disapprove in others we take generally to mend in ourselves. I dare say it will be the peculiar care of them that begin this foundation to inspire always to others to do all in their [power] to forward other establishments, as in all appearance several may spring from this. It's in this light [you should] look on their odd manner of acting in both convents. And as to myself it does not disedify me, as I believe it's all for our good. It's certain others might not think as I do, which makes me sometimes imagine the disappointments I have met about the foundation going abroad to have happened for the best, as very probably they might have lost their vocations had they seen their behaviour in our regard.

[3]

As to what you mention to me about being professed here, as your worthy friend and his uncle approves of it and as it's your own decision, it's highly pleasing to me also. And I think it would be going to a very unnecessary expense, as you could not reap any advantage by it hereafter and I suppose would be very disagreeable to the ladies you are with that anybody intended for this place should profess among them, as they may always have a dread of their returning back to them. On the whole I hope you have come to the best resolution in every respect.

[4]

There is nothing in Mr. Moylan's power he won't do to endeavour to get leave for your former mistress coming over. If he can't succeed by writing, he is so good as [to] be resolved to go over himself, though he can hardly be spared even for a few days from this place, his presence is so necessary here. Yet he has it so much at heart to see it once fixed [that] he does not think anything a trouble [which] he can do to serve it. We all admire that amiable lady's zeal and fortitude to leave her own country. I flatter myself that you and she will be amply recompensed when you see all the number of souls you'll be the means of saving, and the universal good not only to this country and very probably to others. I beg you will tell her I should have wrote to her to acknowledge my thanks and gratitude to her when I heard of her consenting to come here, only the want of not writing the French, or more the fear of my letter being read before it came into her hands as with the help of one of my friends I could have sent [?] a French letter. And at the same time assure her of my respectful compliments.

³ Original in Ursuline Convent, Cork.

⁴ There is a word here which I cannot decipher. (A. O'R.)

[5]

It gave me a vast deal of trouble to hear my cousin had such a violent fit. You may well imagine if I thought she had hysterics, I never would have been such a fool as any way to think the nuns would ever permit her to receive the habit among them. It makes me uneasy to think how disagreeable it must be to; them to have her in the house, as they have a notion it's a disorder that is taken. We can't foresee what sickness it's pleased God to afflict us with or at what time. I wish her native air may agree better with her for her own sake and ours, for a better mistress for the poor children I fancy won't be easy to get. She was indefatigable about. . .⁵

[6]

P.S. As [I am] informed Miss Coppinger has been also very uneasy at not hearing from any of her family, I must beg the favour of you to tell her I heard yesterday from them, and they are all well and [so are] her cousins in this town; and at the same time assure her of my affectionate compliments. Adieu, dear Miss.

LETTER IV

TO MISS FITZSIMONS: 13 MAY 1770⁶

[1]

I am glad to profit of any opportunity to assure you how pleasing it's to me to acquaint you with anything I thought would be agreeable to you, as I am certain [it] will be to hear that I hope we have got a very desirable subject in the young lady I mentioned to you some time ago, recommended by Mr. Austin. I wish I could transmit to you that part of his letter in respect of her, that he wrote to Mr. Doran. [But] as it was not convenient to give it to me, I shall give you a full account of her and some conjectures of my own in her regard. As you may be surprised I have not insisted on a better fortune if you did not know how matters stand, [let me tell you that] I have done nothing in it only with the approbation of our worthy friend and his uncle. Her father will give only £200 to the house, he is to pay £15 a year interest on it; while she lives, he is to give her a pension for herself that he does not choose to name at present. His indignation I believe is so great against her for being a nun [that] he offers her £2,000 if she will marry. Her inclination, I find, was to go to the same convent where she was brought up in. He would not consent to it, as he says there is a probability [that] in France they may demolish all the monasteries. He consented [that] she should go to Flanders, and Liege was the place he chose for her; I suppose, being under an ecclesiastical prince, he thought it would long subsist.

All these objections made her determine, I believe, on taking on here; and [she] says she is greatly pleased to [be] among them that has been educated in France. When he gave her leave to come here, he desired that she should leave Dublin in July and go to a convent in Galway, to remain [there] till things are fixed here. I have begged [that] she should come here and stay with me. In [the] first place she could be of great service and it would be a great comfort to me to have her; and [secondly] it's thought more advisable for many reasons by his odd manner of acting in her regard. At least I imagine he does not see her, so as the footing I request is put on being less expense for her going to Galway than coming from thence would cost him more. If he thought it would be agreeable to her, I dare say he would let her come. I fancy you'll admire to hear she is his only child and, I believe, the same [person] we mentioned to you about two years ago, as everything corroborates with what I heard then, only her being so very young as they told me she was. If it's the same, the father is a very religious man and has made a very good fortune, and retired from business lives in the country. There is a great appearance [that] beside[s] her wealth [?] she will be of vast service to the house. Her name I don't know. She has had a mind to be a nun since [she was] a child, [and she] is mighty devout. Nobody can write better than she does or [has] better orthography— this [is] what Mr. Austin mentions of her in his last letter. When he first spoke of her, he said she had great talents. Providence has ordered everything for the best in her regard to keep her for this place.

[2]

It mortified me that she did not join you; and had she, I am sure she would have met with the same fate that others did. Even Mr Austin heard so much to the prejudice of this Foundation, that I believe he did not endeavour as much

⁵ The remainder of this page has been cut away

⁶ Original in Ursuline Convent, Cork.

to prevail on her as he would [have done] had he known how matters were. Ever since Mr. Halloran has been here, who was informed of the truth of everything, nobody can interest himself more than he does for its success.

[3]

We must think the Almighty permits everything for the best. You'll see with His assistance everything promises well. And His divine hand will uphold us in getting your former mistress. The house she is in will in my opinion bring a judgement on them if they hinder her from being the means of saving so many souls.

[4]

Mr. Moylan desired me to assure you of his most affectionate compliments. He is so hurried that he has scarcely time to eat his meals since the Jubilee. He attempted several times to try to get an hour to sit down to write to you; it was in vain. It mortifies him he can't, as I don't know anyone he has a higher esteem for. His health is so much impaired since this great fatigue that he told me himself yesterday as he could . . .⁷ any ease here to relieve on your account his friend with . . .⁸ afraid it would have no weight with him . . .⁹

If it was not in regard of this Foundation he thinks you would choose to finish your noviceship there, and as soon as leave is got for that other lady to come away immediately . . .¹⁰ He expects his sister every moment and will have time to write to you and to the Superior at the same time as the Jubilee will be soon over. I was surprised when he asked me if I wrote to the mistress of novices. I never did, I know I ought have done it and to . . . ; not writing the French prevented me; as I am very unfond of being troublesome to persons that have not time to spare, and I could not entrust anybody else.

[5]

I hope your fortitude will bring you through all crosses and put a happy conclusion to this Foundation. And never be discouraged from choosing any young lady you think proper. I have often been ashamed for fear you would have thought I was any way flattering you with the success of it. I met so many disappointments; and that very young lady I now mention, I was sorry that we ever spoke of her to you, though we were sure of her when we did and afterwards she was resolved to go to France; you see we have got her back again. And if Miss Smith is not entered into any other convent, Mr. Moylan think[s] he will prevail on her to come here; I sincerely wish he may.

[6]

I beg you'll be so good as to present my compliments to the Superior, [to] your mistress, and [to] your former one who[m] I love and reverence, and [to] Mr Fitzsimons. My best wishes attend the young ladies. All the family of Barryscourt are in perfect health, and Miss Nagle[']s family are also very well. I hope you and they enjoy, as I wish you may always, perfect good [health].

[7]

It gives me a vast deal of trouble to find [that] them two young ladies that want to learn can have no advantage. If it could be permitted them to have anybody to teach them anything you thought would be hereafter an advantage to the house, don't spare any expense. You'll be [the] best judge in that and everything else in their regards. They are happy to have a person of your good sense to direct them. And [I] can with truth say you are under God the chief support of this good work, which I flatter myself you will see prosper far beyond what one has a right to expect in such a country as this. I am, my dear Miss Fitzsimons, your most affectionate friend, Nano Nagle.

LETTER V

TO MISS FITZSIMONS FROM BATH: 20 JULY 1770¹¹

[1]

Though I did myself the pleasure of writing to you lately, yet [I am induced to write again] by a letter I received from our worthy friend [Dr Moylan] who acquaints me with the sudden death of his sister-in-law. She was a most

⁷ Defect due to torn MS.

⁸ Defect due to torn MS.

⁹ Defect due to torn MS.

¹⁰ Two lines are here scratched out in more recent ink

¹¹ Original (incomplete) in Ursuline Convent, Cork.

amiable person and I am most sincerely sorry for her. He says he resolved to leave Cork in about twelve days if the ship be ready and the wind fair. I always admired his zeal; and this is a great instance of it: to leave his afflicted family and tender father. This shock revives all the trouble he had for the death of his eldest son, for if anybody ever died of grief, his daughter-in-law has. Yet, notwithstanding Mr. M's fortitude to leave his friends in this situation, if his father who is old and sickly should fall ill, it won't be in his power to depart as soon as he expected. Nor can I imagine it possible he will let him go, as he can hardly bear him out of his sight when he is in urgent affliction.

[2]

As I heard you thought I came [here] for my health: as you are so good as to interest yourself in my regard, I was afraid it might have made you uneasy. [I beg] to assure you that, thank God, I never was better, and it was not to [take] the waters I came nor have I tasted them. I came to see my brothers and be sure it was with much ado I could prevail on myself to pay this visit. I did not acquaint you with this tour, as I wavered so much with myself that I may say [that] till I was in the ship I was not sure of coming — it was so much against my inclination to leave my children, and only to serve the foundation I never should have prevailed on myself.

Our friend, I have reason to think, spoke with a prophetic spirit by what has happened. For my own family would otherwise never have the opinion they have at present nor ever [have] interested themselves as they do for its success. You must be [have been] surprised when you heard that they knew nothing of it. You heard what was true; the young lady that told you that my sister Nagle says was the first she heard of it and could not believe it at all, she told her so. I fancy you don't forget [that] I wrote to you [that] when I began my schools my own immediate family knew nothing of it. So the same method I was resolved to take [now], as I was sure they would be the first to oppose me. Never said I one word to them till I saw things had such a prospect of succeeding, which I was sure I never could have persuaded them of if they did not see it. And it gives them all great pleasure that I should be the means of promoting such a good work, and my sisters-in-law are as eager to get good subjects for us as we could be. I hope you'll approve of my manner of acting, as the less noise is made about affairs of this kind in this country the better.

[3]

Mr. K[eatin]g got a letter from Dr Butler. On which he came [to] speak to me about his sister. And [he] says [that] as we must be of such service to the kingdom, if we had the Protestants' consent for the establishment he would be better pleased she was amongst us, as she could do more good than anywhere else. On which I told him before my brother and sister that had I consulted my own family [then], I should not have had a school in Cork; which they said was [true]. They argued with him if such a proposal was made he ... the foundation and the schools. I leave you to judge what . . . such a thing must be looked on ...¹²

LETTER VI

TO MISS FITZSIMONS: 28 SEPTEMBER 1770¹³

[1]

I was sorry it was not in my power sooner to tell you how much I am obliged to you for not standing on ceremony with me and being so good as to write to me so often of late, though I could not answer your kind favours as punctually as I wished to do. I believe you'll attribute my silence to the real cause, which is want of time.

[2]

I can't express the joy I had to hear of Miss Kavanagh[s] resolution and that she had joined you. It was what you ambioned this long time past. If once we were fixed, the object in view is so great that I dare say many would follow your and her example. I had little reason when first I thought of this Foundation to expect the success it has already had met. I must say, every disappointment we have had the Almighty has been pleased to make it turn out

¹² The remainder is missing

¹³ Original in Ursuline Convent, Cork

to our advantage; though my impatience very often made [me] not submit to His divine Will as I ought. I believe we are obligated to your worthy friend for this young lady[s] [determination] to come here. We are happy, I think, to have one of the sisters. I am not surprised at what you mention to me in regard of Mr. Kavanagh, for he and his lady by some conjectures of their own was sure Miss Nano intended coming here. As for my part, I could not say anything that gave the least notion that she was [so] inclined; nor did I flatter myself by what the clergyman then told me of her that she would; and I must do her brother and sister justice, they did not seem at all angry with her for it. I dare say she will be still of great service to us by her prayers.

[3]

I can't avoid telling you how eager Mr. Doran is for your coming over soon, as he forsees [sic] they will every day be starting some new difficulties on account of the French lady—which is already the case and was made an objection when Mrs. B. got leave to come. And he wrote to his nephew [Dr Moylan] the many reasons by which it makes it so necessary to have this establishment begun as soon as possible, as he and I are sure by the character you give of this lady that she is not one of those modern religious persons who think every inconveniency such a cross that there is no bearing it. She that makes such a sacrifice for the good of souls will have fortitude to make light, I hope, of not having everything settled as comfortably as it ought to be.

[4]

One could not imagine in a house so lately built that the walls would be so dry as they are, nor can one judge of them till they are plastered, and when the plaster dries immediately, it's owing to the walls being so. Had I not seen it had this effect on it, I could not have believed it. You'll find it will be very habitable this winter, which I did not think it would be. And when you are settled there, I shall be to blame if I don't get every necessary that is thought wanting, as there is nothing in my power I shan't endeavour to do. And I hope you'll be so good as to excuse, in the beginning, all, and consider we are in a country [in which] we can't do as we please. By degrees with the assistance of God we may do a great deal. As I think by what your¹⁴

LETTER VII

TO MISS FITZSIMONS: 17 DECEMBER 1770 ¹⁵

[1]

It is not to be expressed, all the anxiety of mind I have gone through by your and our worthy friend's silence, as I did not get the letter you mention to have been sent by hand. Nor did I know what to think till I had received yours of the 27th of last month.

It did not surprise me to find by it that nothing was yet fixed; as I was sure I should soon be made acquainted with how matters went if there was good news. On the receipt of your letter I spoke to Mr. Doran, who is so good as to write in my name to the Superior, begging her interest and that she would be so charitable as not to defer making her community give a categorical answer. As to that point I think she can't well refuse the last request in conscience; as to the other she may not have any scruple about it. Had I written myself, she might say that I could do it as well before as on this occasion; and others may take it ill that I did not pay them the compliment.

Only Mr. Moylan has such patience and zeal, he would certainly have long ago given up the affair. He is resolved to leave no stone unturned to bring about this Foundation. He says you and he will consider what is best to be done, for I dread they never will consent to lose so useful a subject. It's all in the power of the Almighty; we don't know what is best for us and so ought to be resigned to the divine Will.

[2]

I think I have reason to take it unkind of you to give me so many reasons for making use of the credit I gave you on Mr. Waters, as you may be sure nothing could give me more pleasure than that I could in any way oblige you. And I beg you'll not be uneasy if Mr. Fitzsimons can't pay me readily; for money is at present so scarce and [there is] such a run on the bankers in this Kingdom, that people can't get what is due to them. I shall acquaint you when it's

¹⁴ The remainder is missing.

¹⁵ Original now missing; above is the text printed by Murphy, *Memoirs*, p. 39.

paid. When one is in a strange country any disappointment is sensible. As for my part I am often without money; yet as everybody knows me, I don't mind it.

[3]

It gives me vast pleasure to find that Miss Kavanagh is so well pleased with teaching in the poor-school. It shows a particular call from the great God to take delight in it. I dread, though her health is better, that in winter it will be too cold for her. And it would be better she should take care of herself for the good of the poor here where she can be of more service, than there; and I beg you will endeavour to prevent her from going to them . . .

[4]

The young lady in Dublin, her name is Lawless. When everything was settled, F. Austin told it to her father who came to town; but she could not prevail on him to come with her. He made an excuse that he was old and sickly and the weather was too cold for him to venture. He gave her leave to come when she got company proper for her to travel with. She was with an uncle of hers in James's Street. He engages not to let her want anything during her life.

[5]

We were sure you were coming over, in consequence of reports that certainly you were on your way, until Mr. Doran inquired into the truth. I could have wished that, when you determined not to come this winter, I had been informed of it, not so much on my own account as on hers. I could not have avoided putting myself to some expense. And at a time when I had many calls for money and employed workmen in .the short days, which makes work come out vastly dear; and only, as I mentioned to you, that I was resolved not to buy what could be had in a few hours and at farthest in a few days, I should have put myself to very unnecessary expense, which I am determined not to do till you are landed. This is a day I long for.

[6]

It is a vast pleasure to me to find that your mistress is so much changed in her behaviour, as I think there is no greater happiness in the world than to be in union. Whoever we live with, we must expect to have something to suffer as this world is not to be our paradise.

As I find they will allow you to leave when you have a mind, I hope that you and my cousin will get a person to instruct you in what may be useful to teach hereafter, if you should think proper.

[7]

Give my best respects to Mr. Moylan, to your former mistress, to the Superior and to your present mistress. My affectionate compliments to all the young ladies. To Mrs. Lynch, when you see her, I beg you will say that my best wishes shall always attend her, and that I shall never forget her kindness to me, which I have a grateful sense of.

LETTER VIII

TO MISS MULALLY: 29 SEPTEMBER 1776¹⁶

[1]

This is a pleasure I have longed this some time past for: which was to acquaint you that, what Dr Moylan mentioned to you about two years ago, that I had a desire some establishment should be made to keep up the schools for the poor children. Not finding any person here inclined to undertake such an affair, made me at last consent to the Doctor's request; and last Christmas I took in three persons to join me in this good work. What made me defer all this time was finding myself so improper a person to undertake it. The Almighty makes use of the weakest means to bring about His works.

[2]

I am to send two out of the small number we have to Dr Moylan, as he is very impatient to have them; and in my opinion they are very proper to make a foundation in Kerry, as they have great talents and every virtue proper for it.

¹⁶ Original in the Presentation Convent, George's Hill, Dublin

[3]

I send you the rule which they follow — it's called The Sisters of the Charitable Instruction of the Sacred Heart of Jesus - by this most respectable clergyman, Mr. Shortall, who is most zealous for its success and. will give you a particular account about it. I could wish that we may unite in this Society, and am confident that the great God will direct you to what is most to His glory.

LETTER IX

TO MISS MULALLY: 21 AUGUST 1777 ¹⁷

[1]

I waited for this opportunity or I should not have so long deferred the acknowledging your kind favour and telling you the pleasure it gave me to hear that your and Miss Corballis's health was better. I hope it's so well restored that you both are able to go on with all your pious occupations as heretofore, with the spirit of zeal which the Almighty has, I think, given such a blessing to and success, as to have the schools be useful to such a number of poor children. And I hope the increase of the charities you get will enable you to daily add to the good you do.

[2]

It gave great joy to the Sisters and me to find that you and Miss Corballis were so taken with the rule of the Sisters of the Charitable Instruction. We ardently wish that your and [your] companion's health was so well re-established as to enable you to begin it yourselves, as I'm sure you'll not find any persons more capable. If that is not the Will of the Almighty, you may rely on us that every assistance in our power we shall give towards having an establishment of this Society in the metropolis; not that I think they are so much wanting there, only the good they would do would be more universally known and extend them in other parts of the Kingdom.

[3]

I am building a house, and when it will be fit to inhabit I believe young ladies that have fortunes will join. We have been under many disagreeable circumstances since we began, too tedious to mention. Yet with the divine assistance I think I have reason to imagine, in a few years when we are fixed, it will succeed very well. We have received one young lady of great merit, who has a fortune to support herself. Her vocation was so good, she would not wait till we were settled in a more comfortable manner than at present.

The bearer [Miss Creagh?] is a great friend of mine. She is acquainted with all our Sisters and [is] good to the poor children. She is very desirous to see yours, which you'll oblige me greatly to show her.

LETTER X

TO MISS MULALLY: 24 AUGUST 1778 ¹⁸

[1]

I hope you are so good you won't impute my not answering your kind favour only from the true cause, which is the constant hurry I am always in and from the great aversion I have to writing, which hinders me when I have a moment to spare of profiting of it. I can [not] express the pleasure it gave me to hear from Mrs. Fitzsimons [that] your health is so much better. I am in hopes that this summer will re-establish it perfectly and that the Almighty won't take you to Himself till you see our rule established in your city, as I think none can tend more to His honour and glory in the world than it does.

[2]

I wish it was in my power to do what you proposed to me and I should have readily undertaken it. But I am so much involved in debt, as the first Foundation cost me between four and five thousand pounds; and I can say with

¹⁷ Transcript in the Presentation Convent, George's Hill, Dublin

¹⁸ Original in Presentation Convent, George's Hill. Dublin.

truth that one farthing nobody contributed till the Ladies began their new building and chapel; then some well-disposed persons helped towards it. Since the Ladies come [came] over they never spared me anything, as to the expense I was at about the schools. So you must imagine from this how little I am at present in a situation of making a Foundation in Dublin, I can hardly at present support the one I have made here.

[3]

I discharged the mistresses, all to [except] one whom I had employed such a number of years that [I] could not part with her. And as to the others, I had great fault to find with them that live at [a] great distance from me; and [I] could not see the schools they took care of, only [on] certain days in the week. I should, I am afraid, [have] had never courage to undertake this establishment, only seeing how improper seculars, that did it only for bread, were to take care of poor children; it must be them that have true zeal. We have the charge of them ourselves, and, thank God, they never were tended as at present in every respect.

[4]

The building I [undertook] at a time I could not afford it, has much perplexed me to get money to go on with it. In my opinion a person that has the name of a fortune are the most unfit persons to undertake any foundation, except they can themselves support it. You may be sure I should think myself happy anyway to contribute to it if ever in my power. When we are settled here well and in our new house, as I am informed Miss Corballis's health is much better, she could come and stay with us for some time; and [it] should cost her nothing, as I would readily pay her expense coming down and going up, and the journey may be of service to her

[5]

One thing I am resolved to make a rule among us is: that we never dine abroad or visit or go abroad only to the chapel, the schools or business. Any person[s] that could not conform themselves to this I should think very improper to take to it. I hope we will show the world that nothing makes us go out only where charity obliges us.

[6]

As to the person you recommended to me: if I wanted one without a fortune, you may be sure on your good opinion of her I should prefer her. She is happily settled, and there are many in this town that have a good vocation and are great objects of charity; and the poorer they are, so they have talents, [it] would be them I would have, as your [our ?] rule obliges us to take pensioners where there are no proper schools for young ladies.

[7]

I must beg the favour of you, as you are acquainted with Mr. Fitzsimons to ask him if he brought over with them some books that my sister French gave him at Spa for me. There is one that I would be mighty sorry was lost, as I dread they are all, which is the Rule of the Grey Sisters, which, as I am afraid, I will find it very hard to get another; and I intend[ed] when I got it translated to send it to you. The other books are the Office of Our Blessed Lady, which we could not get them to buy here, in Latin. I sent for some and if he has them, you'll be so good as to get them from him, and to keep them till I get a safe way of getting them here; as when Mrs. Creagh gets goods from Dublin, they can come at the same time. I am extremely obliged to you for all the civility you was so good as to show her daughter, and the young lady is very acknowledging of it and presents you her compliments.

LETTER XI

TO MISS MULALLY: 31 OCTOBER 1778 ¹⁹

[1]

I could not slip this opportunity without assuring my dear Mrs. Mulally the pleasure it gave me to hear she arrived safely and to assure her the trouble it gave me that I could not have more of her company whilst here, which I am every day more sensible of the advantage I should have reaped from it. The hurry I was in at that time made me neither think of [forget] many things which I should have been glad to have had your opinion on.

¹⁹ Original in Presentation Convent, George's Hill, Dublin.

[2]

My thoughts were so much taken up about my nieces preparing for their voyage, which, thank God, was a lucky one, as they had a passage of thirty hours; and if I did not send them by that ship, they would not have gone this winter, as none of the Bristol traders have sailed since and I would not have ventured them in this bad weather to sea. I had a letter from my sister French since they parted, wherein she tells me that Mr. French had hurt his leg, which prevents his leaving Spa at the time they intended; and as I have not heard from her since, I am afraid it's worse and that they won't be at Cambray when their daughters arrive there.

[3]

I am sure she will mention to me what answer that lady you wrote [about] will make; which, if pleasing, I shall lose no time to communicate to you, as I was very much distressed since the young woman that lived with me [who] went with my nieces, left this. I have a gentlewoman that I really was resolved to take this some time past, when fixed in the new house but not till then; one was so much wanting at present as their rule orders to have them on trial for some months. She attends the schools and I hope I shall have no reason to repent of the choice I have made as my first motive was charity, hearing of the great distress she was in, by a lawsuit and an extravagant brother that spent part of her fortune. She has had the best education this Kingdom could afford and has many useful talents, [and shows] the great[est] patience in all her misfortunes, and humility; and [she] seems at present to rejoice at all she has suffered, as it has placed her in so happy a state. She takes much delight in teaching poor children. I hope also that some part of what is due to her will be recovered.

[4]

All our Sisters assure you of their most affectionate respects. You can't imagine how melancholy we were at night after you left us, our recreation passed in speaking of you; and be assured you were not forgot by us in our prayers. I hope you think of me in yours, as nobody wants it more than she who is with the highest esteem, dear Madam, your affectionate friend and humble servant, Nano Nagle.

We all unite in begging you'll be so good as to present our best compliments to Miss Corballis.

[5]

P.S. It gave us all a vast deal of trouble to hear that you have been so ill since you went to Dublin. I hope it was not owing to any cold you got on the road. I had a letter from my sister since I wrote this letter, as Mrs. Creagh expected to leave this [town?] much sooner, but was disappointed in not getting a returned coach. She does not mention one word about what you wrote to Miss Bellew nor [sic] what I wrote myself to her, only that she had received all the letters I wrote to her. As she was not there near as soon as I expected, she got a good many from me. It was the day after her daughters arrived that I heard from her; and she tells me they all dined at Sir Patrick's, where there was a great deal of company; and it was there she wrote to me, by which I imagine the hurry she was in, and not having an opportunity to speak about your affair prevented her from saying anything of it to me. In my answer I begged she would use all her influence with that lady, which I am sure she will. I hope in her next I shall [get] some account of what will be done. Adieu.

LETTER XII

TO MISS MULALLY: 16 DECEMBER 1778²⁰

[1]

What prevented my not [*sic*] answering your kind favour and assuring you the pleasure I had to hear that you was better, [was that] I deferred writing as I every post expected a letter from my sister French. I did not hear from her since her children went, only once which was the day after they went to Cambray, till this moment that I received a letter from her; and [I] shall mention to you every word she writes to me. In regard of it, she says, as she was quite a stranger, ignorant of the institution [it] never having been anywhere she was in, she could give Miss Bellew no great information about it, but that I had it in this town. She is sure that [since it is] you who manages the charitable institution in Dublin, she will be governed very much by you, as far as it will agree with deceased's] intention. We must leave it to the Almighty; He [will] do everything for the best in it, I hope.

²⁰ Original in Presentation Convent, George's Hill, Dublin.

[2]

You was [so] good as to tell me that you would [be] content if I wrote you only a few lines; [this] makes me conclude this [letter], being in a great hurry as generally [I] am. And I [wrote] you a long letter by Miss Creagh, who was going to Dublin, only delayed so long. I believe they won't go till after the holidays. As nothing new has happened since, I refer you to what I mention in it. All our Sisters unite in begging your prayers. We did not forget you the day you mentioned.

LETTER XIII

TO MISS MULALLY: 17 MARCH 1779 ²¹

[1]

Though you'll get a letter by the bearer that I wrote some months ago and that you got a letter by post from me, yet I could not let this opportunity pass without assuring you the pleasure it gives me to hear you are so well recovered. I have not heard anything farther from my sister French about Miss Bellew, and I believe we shall not till she sees yourself.

Miss Creagh will acquaint you in what manner Miss Brady left us. If you remember, when you was [sic] here, I told you that I did not like her; and to be sincere, I was very glad she went of herself. What vexed me was that I imagined the Ladies of the upper house was resolved to take her on what fortune she could bring, and I had reason to believe she was sure of it. Which made me speak to Dr Butler about it, and he desired me not to say one word to them, till he spoke first to them; [in] which I obey[ed] his Lordship. And when he asked them about it, they denied it: all the chiefs in the convent she never spoke to, as they say it was only to some of the young ones. When his Lordship proposed to them never to take any I had received and [that] I should not take any from them without their consent, as it would give scandal that they should take persons on small fortunes that was resolved to be of our Society—they readily complied with his request, and I hope will keep up to it. It's a good sign of our future success that we should meet with crosses in the beginning. All our Sisters] here join me in our sincere love to you and Sister Ann [Corballis].

LETTER XIV

TO MISS MULALLY: 30 OCTOBER 1779 ²²

[1]

It gave me great pleasure to find that your journey back agreed so well with you. I hope it will be an encouragement to you not to slip any good opportunity to see your friends here, which would [give] them so much pleasure. I am much obliged to you for going to see my sister French. She mentions to me that she was sorry it was not in her power to pay you any compliment as she was not in lodging of her own. I am sure she would have been happy to improve her acquaintance. I am glad to hear Miss Bellew is so well disposed to do what you would desire. I hope the Almighty will direct what is most to His honour and glory.

As to the rule I was so desirous to get, which was that of the Grey Sisters, I believe it's not what I have got. They call it Hospitaliers, they call the rule the Third of St Francis. They make the three religious vows for life. More than half the year they are obliged to fast on one meal, and the rest of the year to abstinence from flesh on Mondays and Wednesdays. They have of late been dispensed with saying the Great Office, and only say that of our Blessed Lady. But they have such a number of other prayers that I should imagine they could have little time to attend the sick. This is the rule they follow at their great monastery at Nancy in Lorraine, and where I believe the young woman died that was sent from Dublin. By what I can judge of it, I am afraid if it had pleased God to have spared her her life to come over, I believe she would not have succeeded in this Order in this Kingdom; so the divine Providence does everything for the best. They must be of robust constitution to be received into it, it's mentioned.

[3]

Dr Moylan wrote to the Superior of an Order that is called the Hospitaliers of the Order of St Thomas de

²¹ Original in the Presentation Convent, George's Hill, Dublin

²² Original in the Presentation Convent, George's Hill, Dublin

Villeneuve. She [is] a particular friend of his. She tells him she would send him the book of her rule and constitution, only it's absolutely forbid by their Superior-General to show it to anybody; so she could not send it. She writes in what it consists: which are the works of mercy, spiritual and corporal. They have different houses for these charities which are most useful. In some houses they take care of the sick, [there are] others where they instruct orphans, others where they have boys as well as girls separately, others where they take care of old men and women, others where they receive pensioners—the daughters of citizens and young ladies of distinction. They have houses for penitents and in some places, she says, they are of great service to prisoners. She says she was honoured in these employments, wherein she found most solid consolation; though despicable in the eyes of the world, yet God deigns to look on with goodness. Their rule, prescribes a double charity, which is to instruct the unfortunate, to instruct them in the principal mysteries of religion. They make three vows for life as other religious do; and there is a fourth they make, which is to serve the poor till death. In the houses [in which] they take pensioners they are obliged to have a school for poor girls, on account of inspiring the young ladies with a charity for them, that they should see their wants; and the nuns in them houses also instruct women that come [to them] to know their religion. The education they give their young ladies is quite different from all the other convents. When they know well how to read and write, figure and work, and are well grounded in their religion, then they are employed in going through every employment proper to manage a house and are made good housewives. The young ladies brought up with them are generally very notable as to worldly affairs.

[4]

As to their obligations in other things, it's just the same [as] we have in their constitutions. And we are obliged to most of these charities, only we must prefer the schools to all others, and we make no vows for life. The Cure of St Sulpice who made our rule was the Superior-General of this Order; and by what I see there is very little difference, only we make no vows [for life]. And my opinion is that what hinders their Superior from anybody's seeing it [allowing anybody to see the rule] [is] that in the world they don't know they make vows for life. Now you and your wise and pious director, [who] by what you have told me of him, seems enlightened from above, will judge what is best, for this Kingdom, of the two rules. And till I have your opinion, [I] shall say no more on that subject.

[5]

I am very busy preparing to fill up our new house; and if it's the divine Will to send you any good subjects to keep up your school, you may rely there is nothing in my power I shan't do if they come here. Though I know myself so incapable, yet they will see good example from our Sisters and their time will be employed.

Letters of Nano Nagle (Part 2)

LETTER XV

TO MISS MULALLY: 29 JULY 1780²³

[1]

I believe my long silence has surprised you. Be assured it was not for want of a sincere love and respect. The delay was owing to my waiting to give an account that we were fixed in the new house, which I thought we would have been there at Christmas. [It] was prevented by part of the wall of our yard being broken down to make room for cars to come in to bring stones to make the garden wall for the Ladies—which if I prevented, must have cost them a vast deal on this. I did [not] leave my old habitation, as I could not have the back part of our house exposed, it was not safe to venture. We have dieted ourselves there since Ash Wednesday, which we found more convenient.

[2]

Then when the disturbances broke out in London, I was afraid to venture, imagining the same contagious frenzy may break out in this kingdom. So [I] waited till the times seemed quite peaceful, yet notwithstanding we stole like thieves. I got up before three in the morning [and] had all our beds taken down and sent to the house, before any was up in the street. [I] begged of the Ladies not to say a word about it to anyone of their company that would come to see them. Nor did [I] not let any person know it in the town of my friends, as I was sure [that by] acting in

²³ Original in the Presentation Convent, George's Hill, Dublin

this manner the good work could be carried on much better than in making any noise about it. We removed [on the] 15 [July], so were there on the festival of our Blessed Lady, under whose protection we are. I hope she will preserve us from our visible and invisible enemies and make this house prosper and others of the same Charitable Institution in time.

[3]

I imagine the lady you had hopes would settle something towards a foundation for this Society, will defer it at present. And you may rely on me that I shall never send you any from this that I should not think proper for the place. I have some thoughts of taking two in soon. I shall not say anything of them till we live some time under the same roof, then one would be a much better judge. I know great fault was found with me for dismissing Miss Wolf. I never told, my reasons to the public, only to a few that I could not avoid— though I was accused of doing what was very uncharitable in her regard—for fear of being, any detriment to her. She was taken in at Mrs. Moran's to teach the young ladies; and if they liked her, she intended to take her to be a nun. They did not keep her a month, as they found she was not fit for that state of life. I pity her, as it's not her fault, only her misfortune. Dr Moylan: I gave him your letter to read, and he desired me to assure you of the high esteem he had for you, and at the same time to beg you would ask Father Austin if he did not tell him, at the time he made Dublin his way when coming from England, the same faults that were found in your friend here, and [if he did not] beg he would write to her on them to see if she would change. And I believe there is not one that lives with her thinks she has the least zeal, as they are all very good religious and very exact to keep up to their rule. I believe they would be glad to live in more peace than she is disposed to do.

[4]

As you were so good as to desire to know how my eyes were that was so many months very sore, I, thank God, got the better of them. And I must tell you how I was cured, which [though] I believe few will try this receipt that had such a wonderful effect on me! One of the coldest days last winter and a most sharp piercing wind—and [I] found nothing affected them so much as the wind—though I thought I might on account of them plead some excuse, yet at the same time it was not giving good example not to go through as much as the others, and I walked out to the school at North Gate. And, so far from any bad effect on them, I did not find them worse, and [but], I may say with truth, vastly better; and ever since, thank God, [they] have continued so. I think any little labour I have, the Almighty has given me health to go through it; and if I did not make use of it in His service, He may soon deprive me of it.

[5]

I hope yours is better. We all pray for your long life, and your Sisters beg I will assure you of their sincere love, and mine to Miss Corballis. I thought to send this by Miss Creagh that was. She has married a young gentleman who [with whom] I hope she will be very happy, as he has so good a character and I know him to be mighty charitable. Her uncle is to leave her at his death the best part of his fortune; she will have, I am sure, above £6,000. I must beg you will present my best respects to Mr Mullan.

LETTER XVI

TO MISS MULALLY: 31 JANUARY 1783 ²⁴

[1]

I should have had the pleasure of answering your kind favours before this, only [I was] waiting to have it in my power to send you the £7 which I promised when I had the pleasure of seeing you here. As I may say with truth, few, I believe, is more distressed for money than I am, or you should have had it much sooner. Mr. John Folie will pay it to you, as I have given orders, when he receives some interest due to me; he will pay you whenever you send for it.

²⁴ Original in the Presentation Convent, George's Hill, Dublin. All the previous letters were begun: "Dear Madam." This letter starts with: "My Dearest Friend."

[2]

It gives, I can assure you, I [me] and our Sisters the greatest pleasure to hear that you are in so good a state of health. We were in trouble when we heard you was so ill. We offered our poor prayers to the Almighty, if it was His divine Will, to spare you longer to do good; and [I] hope you'll live [to] do a great deal more. The best works meet with the greatest crosses. I don't approve of your desponding so much as I perceived in your last letter. Though [neither] you nor I should not [*sic*] live to see it prosper in our time, yet I hope it may [prosper] hereafter and be of universal service to the Kingdom. I comfort myself with this thought, when I am most dejected at the many disappointments I have met with.

[3]

We received a novice on the [Feast of the] Presentation of our Blessed Lady. We had a very fine sermon at the reception. There was only a few friends and the clergy present, as our chapel is small, nor did I choose [that] it should make a noise in the town. I shall give you my opinion of our novice from a nine months' acquaintance; nor should I depend on the knowledge I have of her myself as [much as on] the character I had of her since infancy, to think she is really a chosen soul. To say the truth of her, I never saw anybody in Ireland like her for zeal, mortification and humility. She never is so happy as to be [when she is] employed in works of mercy either spiritual or corporal and that she would be from morning till night. I believe she would not think of eating, if she was left to herself.

[4]

I am building the house I spoke to you about for the old women, [for] which I was obliged to apply to the charity of the public as I was not able to build it at my own expense. She longs as much to have it finished as a fine lady would to go into a fine house. Her vocation would be rather more to be an Hospitalier, only she thinks it is more meritorious to take care of the soul than the body. She is only eighteen years old. I am in hope to get another young lady that is very like her as to piety, who has a fortune; she is very young and her parents want to try her.

[5]

I have made a pretty garden and enclosed all the ground part of their house —which has cost a great deal [for] making the walls. We could not do well without it [to provide] some place to walk in, as nobody we receive will go out only [except] to the chapel and to the schools.

[6]

Our Sisters beg [that] I would assure you of their most affectionate compliments. Our Sister Burke has had the yellow jaundice above this twelvemonth and has tried cures, and nothing yet has been of any service to her; so we are very much afraid that she never will get better of it. We all unite in our sincerest regards to Miss Corballis; and be so good, when you see Mr. Field²⁵, to give him my best respects and many thanks for [the] book he was so good as to send me. The reading of that lady's life I wish may be [the] means of others imitating her.

ADDITIONAL LETTERS

LETTER XVII

SISTER ANGELA FITZSIMONS TO MISS MULALLY 21 May 1784²⁶

I hope my ever dear friend has been ere now informed that I received your most welcome letter and the bill it contained in due time, but had not time to acknowledge it the last day I wrote to Sister F[ouhy] who has engrossed all my thoughts and time since her late trouble which I hope is her *last* as she has had an uncommon share of afflictions almost since she came to the use of reason. May the Almighty grant her and her family who feel for her

²⁵ Father Michael Field, parish priest of St Michael and St John's, Dublin.

²⁶ Original in the Presentation Convent, George's Hill, Dublin

the grace to make a proper use of them. I own I am very deficient in that point as in many others. I flatter myself my dear friend is sufficiently persuaded of the gratification your dear and edifying letters are always to me, yet [I] am content to be deprived of that favourite pleasure as often as I wish, when I consider the multiplicity of your occupations, and how painful it is to apply to writing, perhaps with or after violent headaches, which I often experience and [this] has been the cause that prevented me giving you much sooner the account you desired of our dear, respectable, and much-regretted N[ano] Nagle, whose strength has been visibly declining these twelve months, particularly this last and severe winter. Her limbs were so feeble she was obliged to use a stick in walking, and has been seen to stop frequently in the streets to get a little strength to proceed in her long and painful walks. That you know the extent of better than I, as you have seen them. They were, indeed, so many steps on the road to eternal life.

She added to her usual austerities that of fasting every Wednesday and Friday on bread and water since she left our convent and lived in her own house. She enjoined secrecy of this matter during her life to all her religious sisters. She took the discipline four times each week during the "Miserere", she made instructions three hours each day during Lent, fasting, and passed eleven hours last Holy Thursday night before the Blessed Sacrament, kneeling all that time, as she was never seen to sit whenever it was exposed. Her fervour increased so much towards the end of her course that I believe she lost all sense of bodily pain or suffering. She told me last Easter Monday (when I enquired how she was after the Holy Week) that she never remembered to have been so strong as the last Easter Saturday, and that though she had read the Passion of our Lord three times at different schools the Monday and Tuesday before, she did not perceive the least fatigue; "and you know it is pretty long," said she. She had repeated neglected colds during the winter, yet walked abroad when anyone else would have been in their bed. On a very wet day she went as usual to all her schools, and was penetrated with rain, as of late she walked so slow. The next day, which was a Wednesday, she was taken with a spitting of blood at a lady's house where she breakfasted, who told me that she requested her to go no farther that day but to return home. N[ano] Nagle answered "What a coward you are! I have a mind to go to the schools, and walk it off as I am used to do "; but a weakness ensued, and the dear woman walked home for the last time.

However, she did not complain to her sisters, nor even to the doctor who went to visit one of them, till, in the evening, they perceived her to change colour and persuaded her to go to bed, bathed her feet and she perspired. We did not hear one word of it till next morning, by chance. I heard that she was not out that morning, and inferred that she must have been very ill, and immediately proposed sending for the doctor; but first we sent for Miss Fouhy, who confirmed all our apprehensions, and prayed us to send for the doctor, as she positively forbid them to send for him. He ordered her immediately to be let blood; next day to be blistered; and the day following another bleeding, which was again repeated—but all without success. An inflammation had been long formed in her lungs; a violent cough, great oppression, and total weakness, were the symptoms; but she never once complained, not even of the blister, and had hopes of recovering, till about twenty-four hours before her death. On seeing her blood quite corrupted and inflamed, she knew it was impossible; however, she sent money to three of her favourite children to desire them to pray for her recovery, if it was for the glory of God, that she might have more time to prepare for eternity.

The doctors would not permit her to receive the last sacraments 'till about seven hours before she died, lest the application and her extraordinary devotion would exhaust her too much, as they had still hopes that God would spare her longer to the poor and distressed, to whom she was a tender mother. She expired about one o'clock on Monday, the 26th April, the sixth day of her illness, in the 69th [sic] year of her age, as much regretted on earth as she was welcomed in heaven, where I hope she is now interceding for us, that we may follow her great example.

I refer you to Sister F[ouhy] for an account of her burial. She ordered herself to be buried in the poor ground which is near this and where [Sister] Betty Burke is interred, and desired that all her sisters should be interred there also; but we would not consent that her venerable remains should be in such a place, exposed to be disturbed by the multitudes that are hourly brought there, and in order to comply with her orders, we have consented to permit all those who will die in the house she instituted to be interred in our burial-place, where she lies.

To prevent this being taken notice of by the Parish Minister, &c. we have made a door which opens into her garden, and is never to be opened but for this purpose, as Nano Nagle gave positive orders to her sisters never to have any connexion with this community, for very prudent reasons, to prevent what happened when you were here.

It was not in my power to make your compliments to (*illegible*) personally, I prayed Mr. Callanane who is our

Superior and theirs also to make them for me. I also told him of your desire of sending two persons to be instructed in their Rule and M. [Nagle's] promise of accepting them. He asked me if you intended to pay a pension for them while here to which I could not answer. He went immediately to propose them to the Sisters that they may foresee to make room for them as they expect two more who were ready to come when M. N[agle] died, as he went to the country that day. I have not seen him since, but am sure he will procure a place for those you desire, if you choose it, but may it not answer as well for you to get their Rules in English, and keep your young women under your own eye. May God direct my dear friend in such an important undertaking, you will be pleased M. N[agle] has left a very sufficient maintenance for five sisters —£2,000 and £2,000 more at the death of her brother Joseph, if he dies without issue; all on condition that they comply with, and observe the rules she has left them, and to be under the inspection of her sister Ffrench and family, to whom she has left £2,000 more. I hope I have complied with my dear friend's request as well as my memory allows. Adieu, dearly beloved friend. Pray for me-. . .

LETTER XVIII

DR MOYLAN, BISHOP OF KERRY, TO FATHER LAURENCE CALLANAN²⁷

27 October 1785

It gives me much concern to find you meet with any difficulty in adjusting, conformable to the pious intentions of the venerable foundress, the affairs of that very charitable and useful foundation. Her most favourite object was that establishment; and to settle it on a solid footing was what she had most at heart. No one can be better acquainted with her *will* than you are. I am confident that her friends will readily acquiesce in any measure you may propose to carry into execution, and to prevent the funds appointed by her from any danger of being alienated from the charitable uses for which she intended them. The disinterested zeal and attention you have on all occasions shewn to promote the temporal and spiritual interests of these two most useful institutions, prove how well the unreserved confidence she had in you was placed. Continue your exertions in their favor—God, whose cause you labor for, will be your reward.

LETTER XIX

MOTHER ANGELA COLLINS TO MISS MULALLY²⁸

31 March 1786

The pleasure I had of receiving yours of the 15th inst. has been such as to make me forget my former jealousys (sic) to you on account of your silence, and am sincerely concerned for your bad state of health, as I am confident no person would make a better use of a good fund of health than you would, but God is pleased to afflict his own and I have every confidence that he will support you under all your difficulties until you'll complete the great work for which you have so long laboured, this I assure you is the constant prayer of our little community, as we are convinced next to our holy Foundress none would be of greater loss to our Infant Institution in this country than you would be, as it's rare to find any person in this country of your sentiments and hers with regard to the salvation of the poor, and God only knows what a deluge of ignorance they are buried in, and it's only those who are daily employed among them can tell the use early Instructions would be, and tho' it were to be wished it was propagated in every County, yet no place stands more in need of it than the City of Dublin and Cork from the numerous poor residing in both cities.

I am charmed to hear of the expectation you have of the Lady's joining you whom you mention and I wish I had it in my power to be of the least use to such a great work, as I must own under Heaven there is nothing I have so much at heart, and I assure you I am always willing whatever my poor capacity is capable of to serve you on this occasion. You confer too great an honour on me when you ask my advice on this head, as I am sure you are much a better judge than I could be. But as you wish for my poor opinion I'll answer you candidly, that if you could get one

²⁷ Brenan, *Life of the Reverend Laurence Callanan*, (Cork, 1818), p. 31.

²⁸ Original in the Presentation Convent, George's Hill, Dublin.

or two with a fund of Piety and good sense it would be preferable to any other Talents, as they could be easily instructed in everything else proper for the Institution. Indeed in my opinion it's needless to have extraordinary Talents for poor children and without the above mentioned perfections they would be of very little use to such an Establishment, for tho' there would be no danger while they had you for a model of their erring in these points, but it's after your death there may be danger of the permanency of this great work, we have the comfort to hear from the best divines in this city that there never was so much good done since St Patrick's time as has been promoted by our holy Foundress' Establishments as they say it's the only counterpoise to the Charter Schools and the only means to prevent the growth of Heresy. God seems to give a particular blessing to all Bishop Moylan's works, as indeed the Lady sent by him to us for his Mission possesses every virtue that one could wish for her vocation.

I am happy to hear that Miss Corballis has such a change for the better in her health, who knows but God in his goodness would enable her to undertake our Rule, he often works wonders in favour of the weak when they have a good heart. Mrs. Fouhy joins me in most affectionate compliments to you both assuring you that you may command us when and as you please.

LETTER XX

FATHER LAURENCE CALLANAN TO MISS MULALLY ²⁹

28 October 1788

I have been favoured with yours of the 21st inst. in due course, but deferred answering 'till I could give you an account of Miss Kelly's reception, which took place yesterday. She would have been received to the habit before, but that Dr Moylan had been in Bath for the re-establishment of his health, whence he returned lately, and appointed the first convenient day for the ceremony.

He performed it with all solemnity in his Pontificals, after a sermon suitable to the occasion was preached. He has the institute so much at heart, he would spare no efforts to promote it, for he every day experiences its great utility to religion; it was for this reason Miss Kelly's reception was put off 'till his return from England.

He received an answer highly flattering from the Holy Congregation, expressing how much they were edified by the letter wrote them relative to the Institute; they wish its establishment, but required that the constitution should be sent them for their approbation. The only difficulty they make is, that the Holy See is not accustomed to approve of religious congregations of women uncloistered. But 'tis hoped that this will be done away by further reasons that will be offered in a letter that, I believe, will be sent them in a little time.

Dr Moylan intends writing this day to Dr Troy, if at leisure, he told me so last night. Your subject joins the rest of the ladies in presenting you best respects. She enjoys good health[^] and has vast zeal for this holy and most useful institution. I pray you to give my best compliments to the worthy Mr. Mulcaile.

LETTER XXI

DR MOYLAN, BISHOP OF CORK, TO DR TROY, ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN ³⁰

7 November 1788

Most Hond and Dear Lord,

Miss Mulally wishes, as I have been given to understand, to establish under Your Grace's direction in Dublin, a foundation for the Instruction of poor children similar to the one established in Cork by the venerable Miss Nagle

²⁹ Original in the Presentation Convent, George's Hill, Dublin

³⁰ Troy Papers, Dublin Diocesan Archives.

— From the many and great advantages which religion and society have experienced by the Institution in Cork, the measure proposed by Miss Mulally deserves, I am fully persuaded, Your Grace's kindest protection and attention— To the charitable exertions of that pious foundation we are principally indebted for whatever religion and morality remain among the lower class of our people—Miss Nagle, the venerable foundress was early called by divine providence to the care and instruction of the poor — near 40 years did she spend in that very laborious, but most meritorious occupation — she died in the odour of sanctity a victim of her zeal and charity to the poor. In different parts of the city she established schools, where above 400 poor children, boys and girls, were constantly instructed in the principles of Religion, in reading, writing and arithmetic, with needleworks of different kinds for the girls, by persons appointed and paid by her for that purpose—these schools she daily visited herself, examined and instructed the poor children and took every care that the masters and mistresses gave due attention to their instruction — Her exertions on these occasions were inconceivable and nothing but the hand of God could have supported her under the constant fatigues of her laborious mission — She prudently foresaw however, that a work of this extensive charity could not long subsist, unless the persons charged with the Instruction considered it as a duty, and attended to it, not for a salary, but from motives of religion and zeal for God's glory — after recommending the matter to God by long and fervent prayer she judged the establishment of a Religious Community necessary to perpetuate the good work; and the Ursuline Order, on account of the 4th vow of instruction, which characterizes it, appearing to her the most eligible for her purpose, at much expense and after surmounting some difficulties she founded the very useful and respectable monastery of that Order now in Cork — but as the Religious of that house were determined on keeping the enclosure; and besides, as they embraced the education of the rich with the instruction of the poor, she perceived they could not possibly carry on her favourite object, the instruction of the poor, in the great extent that her charity would wish, and that the wants of the poor seemed to require a Society, who would consecrate themselves entirely to the instruction only of the poor seemed to her necessary—relying on Divine Providence she undertakes it—builds a house for the purpose—assembles five [*sic*] young women of tried zeal and charity for the poor, who readily join'd her. They practice every religious virtue in the interior of their house, whilst they labour in the schools with most indefatigable zeal to form the tender minds of a multitude of poor children to the practice of every Christian Duty—on leaving the world her only wish for this life was the success and propagation of that Society—She left a fund for the decent support of it—it seems to progress beyond all human expectation —her spirit animates the sisters that compose it—it's incredible the good they do by their charitable exertions—acquainted as I was with the venerable Miss Nagle's views, and the great advantage her establishment was to the great Cause of Religion; the moment I was charged with the administration of the Diocese, I considered it one of the first objects of my attention, and to give stability to it was my most earnest wish—the best method that occurred to me was to engage the sisters to their Charitable Institution by the 3 ordinary vows of religion with a 4th vow of *Instructing the Poor*—to adapt the Constitutions of the Ursulines for the direction of the Institute as far as may be consistent with their functions in regard to the poor, which must be the great object ever in view, and the principal characteristic of their Establishment — by this means the members of the Community would be steadily fix'd in that vocation and persons of some property would the more readily join them, when they saw the Institution fix'd on a more settled and permanent foundation — I wrote in consequence to the Cardinal Prefect about 6 months ago — He highly approved of the good work, assured me the Holy See would cheerfully sanction so useful an establishment, desired the Rules and Constitutions should be forwarded to him to have examined as is usual, but gave me to understand that with the Religious vows of Profession, enclosure would be necessary — if this be necessary, it would defeat the principal end in view; and I would rather leave them under simple vows and resolutions, as heretofore, than prevent them from attending, by their enclosure, the schools of the poor — but this difficulty I think will be easily done away — when we represent, that the other Religious Orders in Dublin, Galway etc. are not bound to enclosure; at least they don't observe it, and if they be dispensed with from observing it, on account of their temporal conveniences and circumstances; a dispensation should be more readily granted in favour of a work of such Charity—the more so as the subjects of the Establishment would oblige themselves never to quit their enclosure but for the pious purposes of their institute, except with a written permission of the Bishop, which would never be granted but when Religion and Charity sanctioned it—I have not yet answered the Cardinal's letter; nor will I write to him on this subject until I be so happy as to hear from Your Grace; as I wish to have your sentiments thereon, and therefore request you will be so good as to honour me with them when it may be convenient — Dr Butler of Cashel is soon to meet Your Grace — He is acquainted with the establishment in Cork and will have pleasure in communicating his thoughts to Your Grace thereon—I beg to be most affectionately remembered to His Grace of Cashel and with all respect to the other Prelates that attend your meeting—Lord Kenmare, with whom I am at present on a visit, assures Your Grace of his respectful salutes—he has purchased a house for one of our charitable establishments in his town of Killarney and fix'd £50 a year for two subjects to instruct poor children. May God reward his great charity!

LETTER XXII

FATHER LAURENCE CALLANAN TO MISS MULALLY ³¹

1 October 1791

On receipt of your late favour, I waited on Dr Moylan and Mr. Collins to notify your wishes. They are, be assured, very zealous for the propagation of the holy and meritorious Institute, but present circumstances will by no means admit their sending a subject to Dublin so soon as you expect. The subject sent here from Kerry, near five years ago, must return to Killarney immediately to take possession of Lord Kenmare's foundation. This nobleman is anxious to see this great work get forward, and is pressing to have it commenced without delay; as Miss Curtayne was sent here to fit her for that establishment, in the endowment of which Lord Kenmare has been very liberal, she must now go to undertake the great work in compliance with the duties of her state and the end for which she has been destined. Another must go with her, as it would be improper and at the same time discouraging to her to be alone.

The Community is not increased since I had the pleasure of seeing you last; judge then whether they could spare another for any establishment whatsoever. With difficulty I prevail on myself to take up the pen to give the disagreeable information; for, be assured, 'tis painful for me to write as it is to you to hear that it will not be in our power to co-operate in the glorious work heaven has inspired you to engage in, so soon and so effectually as you and we ardently wish.

The confirmation of the Institute is not yet arrived. The Agent frequently wrote that the Pontiff and the Cardinals could scarce attend to anything but the distracted affairs of France, but in a letter received about six weeks ago, he mentions that the Rule has at length received the necessary -approbation, and that in a few posts he would send it forward. However, we are yet obliged to wait in anxious expectancy. Doctor Moylan told me he would write last Monday to Rome to urge the expediting of it. As soon as it arrives I will have the pleasure of giving you immediate information.

I am exceedingly glad to hear that Mr. Mulcaile is so much retrieved, and pray the Almighty may give him a length of days to edify the surrounding faithful by his example; his zeal wore him down, but the spirit that supported him will be his eternal consolation. My best respects to him and the ladies of your house. Dr Moylan desires me to assure you of his best regards, and his earnest wishes for the happy establishment of your Community.

LETTER XXIII

DR MOYLAN TO MISS MULALLY ³²

26 June 1794

I received your favour of the 7th, and beg leave to assure you of every good wish of my heart for the success of your new establishment, and that I shall be always happy to contribute everything in my power to forward an object of so much importance to religion. The two sisters, who have lately professed for it, seem blessed with the spirit of the institute, and will, I trust in the Lord, answer your expectations. It were, indeed, to be wished that they had a little more experience; but our worthy friend Mr. Mulcaile's enlightened direction, with your good advice and example, will, under God, supply whatever might be deficient. Whenever you may deem it expedient, they will be prepared to set off and attend your call. I would, however, recommend their remaining here until after the annual retreat in the beginning of August.

³¹ Original in the Presentation Convent, George's Hill, Dublin.

³² Original in the Presentation Convent, George's Hill, Dublin.

Be assured it would be the highest satisfaction to me to send with them an experienced sister. I know how advantageous it would be at the commencement of this charitable establishment; but circumstanced as our house here is at present, I don't see it possible. Mrs. Tobin, by what the sisters assure, and, indeed, I am convinced of it, cannot be spared from the office she now fills; besides, the weakness of her constitution would render her by no means suited to so arduous a task. Were the strength of her body equal to the vigour of her mind and to the virtuous qualities (sic) of her heart, no one would be better fitted for the undertaking. Mrs. Lane, now at Killarney, is the person I had in view to send with the two sisters. She was to have returned this month; but as Miss Conway, who was received for the foundation in Killarney, and was to replace her, thought proper to quit the institute before the time of her profession, it will be impossible to remove Mrs. Lane until we can send another subject in her place. This we cannot do until next summer, as the person now preparing for it, will not profess until then. This is a disappointment we did not foresee. But God's will be done!

I shall abridge, according to your wishes, the time of the postulation and probation of the two you purpose sending down; and by the time they will finish their course here, we shall be able to send Mrs. Lane with them, or some time before if it be deemed necessary. You may depend on every exertion in my power to promote your pious views in regard to your infant establishment—it's the work of God, and He will in His own time consolidate and perfect it. I shall soon send an account to Rome of the progress of the Institute, and will profit of the occasion to supplicate for what you have so much at heart, and to call for the indulgences you wish for [on] the Feasts of St Francis Xavier and St Teresa.

I request you'll present my respects to my most honoured confrere and friend, Doctor Troy, and my affectionate salutes to Mr. Mulcaile. I beg you'll both remember me before the Lord.

LETTER XXIV

MOTHER ANGELA COLLINS TO JOSEPH NAGLE³³

12 June 1800

I had the honour of receiving your kind favour of the 10th March, the contents of which is to this community a new proof that the confidence they always reposed in you was well grounded, and for which they feel the deepest gratitude. A few days after I was honoured with your letter I received one from Mr Galwey, wherein he said he had been directed by you to ascertain and state to me how the effects of Miss Nano Nagle stood. He also inquired of me if I had any list or documents of her effects, for that he could find none, and desired I would appoint a gentleman to meet him in Cork for the purpose of looking over them—which our worthy Prelate Dr Moylan was good enough to do at my request.

Mr. Galwey had nothing to produce to him but a copy of the account which you were furnished with by Mrs. Gould and which he brought me to read. I was sorry to find in reading over this account that the fears I always had of Mr. Roche's conduct were not groundless. In the first place he always showed an unwillingness of coming to a settlement with either of the convents. Secondly he did not seem to wish to produce her will, he kept it eight or ten years without getting it registered. And [he] always insisted, when speaking to me, that it was done, till I found out the truth by having the interest stopped of a hundred pounds which I have in the Tontine and which they would not pay me till the will would be registered. And though I told him this, still he did not get it done for near two years after. He also mentioned to you and others that our dear and venerable Foundress did not mean [? read " meant"] we should get only the interest of the sums bequeathed to us, which I fear he did with the intention that you may

³³ Original draft in South Presentation Convent, Cork.

leave the money in his hands instead of ordering it to be paid.

These and many other circumstances was the cause of my writing so repeatedly to you to bring him to a settlement as I feared everything would be found unsettled at his death. But I always consoled myself with the thought that it was not to him but to you we were to look up, and that being agent so long to the Family perhaps you had reason to have more confidence in him than others had; and on this supposition thought I should not be teasing you knowing we were always safe in your hands.

I was surprised that neither Mrs. Gould nor Mr. Galwey had any documents of Miss Nagle's property to produce, for, as I have informed you before Mr. Roche had immediately on her death possessed himself of the key of her desk and kept it for more than two years, during which time he came repeatedly to examine her papers and took with him whatever he thought proper, nor did he ever bring any person with him to be a witness of what he was doing.³⁴

I supposed he must have been authorised by you to act thus, as I knew he was not by our holy Foundress. He also sent to his house a small trunk of hers which I always understood contained many valuable papers belonging to the Family. When I mentioned this trunk to Mrs. Gould since her father's death she seemed quite ignorant of it. But Mr. Galwey has acknowledged lately to Dr Moylan that there was such a thing sent to him by Mrs. Gould lately, and he expressed a wish that Dr Moylan would appoint some gentleman in Mallow to see it opened. But I fear it is long since as well ransacked as her desk was, in which he left nothing but a parcel of old letters and useless papers except your bonds for the £2,105 English and the lease of our house which was useless to him to take. He also took an iron chest that was empty and a large red chest that contained books and papers.

As Mrs. Gould's accounts were sent to me for perusal I thought I ought to inform you of my remarks on them. My astonishment was great to find our venerable Foundress was brought in debtor to him, and the greater part of her legacies still unpaid. I had the honour and happiness to be more than nine years a subject of hers before death; during which time I understood her income to be more than £600 per year, that it was through Mr. Roche's hands she received this money, and that it was out of this annual sum she built two small houses, which makes a part of the Ursuline Convent, as it was the Ursuline Ladies themselves that built the remainder of it. It was out of it also that she built this house we now live in, which is but a very poor one. The Alms House which she built was done by donations which she got from pious ladies of her acquaintance; which donations with the names of the givers is marked in a book in this house. She promised the Ursuline Ladies at the beginning of their establishment £2,000 as help towards a fund, £1,100 of which she paid them in by degrees out of this annual sum; the remainder is the £900 bequeathed in her will to Mrs. Kavanagh.

Dear Sir, I give you this minute account that you may see the more clearly she never drew any part of the principal of her property. And I met lately with an old pocket-book of hers in which she registered the different sums she received during the year — which sum seems to be about what I mentioned; and this continued for several years, all which she received through the hands of Mr Roche and which must have made him well acquainted with what and where her property was. Now he was present with me while the attorney was drawing her will and heard her mentioning the different legacies which amounts at least to £10,000. He never asked her where this property was, which showed he knew it well; nor did he say that she was bequeathing too much, which surely he should have done if he had any doubt of her property's not being sufficient; nor did he ever tell me nor any other person that I could hear of, from her death to his own, that he had any apprehensions of not having sufficient substance to pay all. And far from that, I had sufficient reason from his conduct to think that I would have a good residue coming to me when the affairs would be settled, for when the two poor women Mrs. Walsh and Mrs. Byrne — between whom she bequeathed ten guineas per year during their lives — died, I called on him for this sum together with £5 per year which was left Mr. Jones during his residence in Cork (which I considered myself entitled to), I also asked him for £55 to enlarge our house, at another time when much distressed I asked him for £50 — all of which he gave me as out of the residue, without hesitation or any remark of want of means. And I am convinced he could make none, as our dear Foundress retained to her last breath that same recollection and sound sense which appeared through the whole tenor of her life. And I am sure if she did not suppose the residue of her fortune would be something considerable, she would never have charged me with paying £50 out of it in charity, as some time before her death she expressed her regret that she was not able to do as much for our Institute as she wished, and gave me her

³⁴ Mrs. Gould was the daughter of Thomas Roche. Mr. Galwey was the agent for the Nagle property.

reasons which delicacy prevents me from mentioning, and at the same time told me that from your goodness of heart I had everything to expect from you.

I feel sensibly on troubling you with so tedious a letter, but think I ought to make things as plain to you as I can. And God alone knows what this community feel (sic) from their present distressed situation, being in debt and provisions extremely dear. And [I] think if you were thoroughly convinced of what we suffer, your charity and goodness of heart would not permit you to lose any time in settling our affairs.

In your favour to me you were so good as to mention that you had written to Mr. Galwey to give me such a sum as he could spare. He has not mentioned anything of this to me, but is very punctual in paying our interest quarterly. You were also pleased to mention that you were willing to give us the £2,000 you were willed by your sister if we were satisfied to allow it as part of the £2,150 English. You may be sure that this sum or any sum you could spare would be cheerfully allowed by us as part payment of the money you mention, and that we would consider it as a very extraordinary favour and a high act of charity before God. Under heaven you are all we have to look up to for our temporal support; for though a few in this community have brought in a sufficiency for themselves, the greater number are depending on the fund our dear Foundress promised during her life and willed us at her death. She always considered you as a Father for the temporals, also our dear Bishop Dr Moylan as its spiritual Father. We have then under heaven to place our confidence in you, for if we are left to your heirs and to their agents, we have nothing to expect but that this whole Institute which cost so much to bring it to what it is, will fall to the ground, and this poor community reduced to beggary.

LETTER XXV

BISHOP MOYLAN TO JOSEPH NAGLE ³⁵

2 July 1801

I avail myself of the Rev. Doctor MacCarthy's going to the neighbourhood of Mallow to offer you my best salutes and to give you an exact account of the actual state of the temporals of the two Religious Establishments founded in this City by your ever to be revered sister, Miss Nano Nagle of venerable memory.³⁶

From the appearance of the Ursuline Convent you probably might have supposed that they were at least in easy circumstances. Give me leave to assure you that, far from being at their ease, they are in debt which various causes gradually served to accumulate: (1) They lost by the French Revolution the part of the property left for their establishment by their venerable Foundress, which she had placed for them in the French Funds. (2) Their new building cost them above a third more than they intended to expend on it. (3) A confidential servant maid, who marketed for the convent, robbed them of near two hundred pounds. (4) The great increase on the hearth tax, the new window tax on their extensive premises, and an increase of late on every other tax. (5) The exorbitant price of provisions and of every other article of housekeeping, which have trebled these few years past, for about eighty persons. (6) The support of five French emigrant nuns who threw themselves on them, and of a poor Carthusian Monk, since the commencement of the French Revolution.

From these different causes they incurred a debt so considerable, that, had I not found means to raise six hundred pounds for them, that most useful establishment could not long subsist. There is as much due to them through Miss Kavanagh, on the Ormond and Kavanagh's Estates, as would liquidate the entire debt. But they can get neither interest nor principal, and I fear they stand a poor chance of ever recovering the greater part, as the deeds on which their just claims are grounded were not, through ignorance in them of the forms of law, duly registered. They had it in contemplation to petition the friends of their establishment for charitable assistance. I prevented them from making such an application, in the hopes that divine Providence would open some other more pleasing means for their relief. When you had the goodness to favour them with a visit, through delicacy the Ladies were shy of exposing their distress to you. But I deem it incumbent on me to lay before you their real situation for your kind consideration, convinced as I am of the friendly interest you take in an establishment founded by your venerable sister and which has been, and must ever as long as it subsists be, productive of the greatest advantages to the cause

³⁵ Original in South Presentation Convent, Cork.

³⁶ Rev. Robert MacCarthy, vicar-general of the diocese of Cork.

of religion in this country.

They are happy to hear that you intend to secure for them before you leave the Kingdom the £800 due to them on your dear sister's will; it is part of their foundation. And they flatter themselves with the hopes, and I beg to add mine to theirs, that you will have the charity to remit the £9 10s rent of the house as your brother did, and discharge them entirely from it by a legal act, to prevent hereafter your heirs, who may not feel for them as you do, from having any claim on them for it. And should you in the extent of your goodness and charity and of your regards for the memory of their venerable Foundress, think proper to contribute towards their further relief, they would receive both benefactions with the utmost gratitude and thanks, and their fervent prayers would be incessantly offered up to the throne of Divine Mercy in your favour. Indeed, my dear Sir, I am persuaded you could not dispose of a small part of your extensive property the Lord has bestowed on you, to a more charitable and more meritorious purpose. I beg leave to enclose a Form of a legal discharge of the rent of £9 10s for the house, which I got drawn up to spare you the trouble.

As to the Convent of the Presentation, you are already well acquainted with its actual state. Its existence absolutely depends on your goodness, they have no other resource. You have quieted the minds and gladdened the hearts of the poor Sisters and made them happy by your charitable donation and the assurance you have been pleased to give of securing the sums mentioned for them in their Foundress's Will. They'll apply themselves now with new fervour to fulfil the pious views which their dear Mother had in establishing their Institute for the instruction of the poor. May God bless you and be your great reward!

The Rev. Mr. Laurence Callanan, a most respectable clergyman and Guardian of the Franciscan House in this city, who attended your good Sister in her last moments, assured me a few days ago that the day immediately after she had made her will Mr. Thomas Roche declared to him that after all the legacies would be paid off a *considerable residue* would remain for the Sisters of the Presentation Convent. He must then have known the extent of her property and where it was. I cannot but suspect a fraud in the management of the trust reposed in him.

LETTER XXVI

JOSEPH NAGLE TO BISHOP MOYLAN ³⁷

31 Aug. 1801

I received the honour of your letter handed to me by Dr McCarthy, from which I am very sorry to learn that the Ladies of both Convents are in distressed circumstances, and the more so as it is not in my power to afford them such relief as I could wish. However what has been done by me in their favour will, I am persuaded, not only secure Mrs. Kavanagh's debt of £800 but likewise answer other demands claimed from my sister's Will.

Dr McCarthy will deliver you £212 10 3 — £187 13 6 being their proportion of £600 received on account of the effects by Mr. Kernan, £10 6 6 being deducted for their part of the Bill of Cost which I paid and which amounted in the whole to above £130 from January 1799 to August 1801. The remainder is my subscription to the Presentation Convent till I pay them £400 according to promise. These sums you will please to dispose of to the poor Convent or to the Convents as you judge expedient.

As to the £9 10 0, were it a property of my acquisition, I should think myself at liberty to do with it what I thought proper. But as it is a Family inheritance and a small spot saved out of a very considerable estate lost to the Family by a bill of discovery, I should not deem myself justified in alienating it, though I am convinced no rent but a mere acknowledgement will be demanded from it, as long as it continues a religious establishment, from my heir or successors. Mr. McCarthy is the bearer of a deed which I have no doubt will give satisfaction.

³⁷ Original in Ursuline Convent, Cork.

LETTER XXVII

MOTHER CLARE CALLAGHAN TO BISHOP COPPINGER

Written between 1800 and 1804

Bishop Coppinger's address in 1794 to the Cork Amicable Society on the life and work of Nano Nagle contained some errors. Mother Clare Callaghan³⁸ with the approval of Mother Angela Collins corrected the mistakes. Internal evidence shows that the letter was written between 1800 and 1804³⁹. The corrections have the authority of Mother Angela Collins who was Nano Nagle's closest confidant.

Mother Clare Callaghan states that (a) Nano Nagle never taught in a school in Dublin, (b) the foundress at her death was "aged 66 or at least within a few months of it."

Bishop Coppinger's attention was directed to other instances of misplaced emphasis, e.g. the effect on Nano of the early morning scene in Paris when people awaited the hour of Mass was exaggerated. The revelation of the love of the poor which animated her young sister and that sister's premature death had a more profound influence on Nano's decisions.

A fixed point is given in the obscure chronological sequence of events in Nano's early life. Mother Clare Callaghan states that when Nano returned to Ireland after her stay in a French convent her mother was dead. We know from other sources that Mrs. Nagle died in January 1748.

The following is a copy of the draft now preserved in the South Presentation Convent, Cork.

I should have a thousand apologies to make to your Lordship for delaying so long the account you required of our venerable foundress, but have to regret that [the] humility which always prevented her of speaking of herself has hid her saintly life even from her intimate companion, our present Superioress, who is the only person from whom I could expect information. And from her I could only collect that some mistakes are in the life published respecting the progress of Miss Nagle's vocation and the commencement of her instruction which was in this city—for she never taught in Dublin. The circumstance of her being struck with the appearance of persons at a church in Paris when she was returning with her sister from a ball, had then no more effect than to give her serious thoughts on the loss of time.

But being soon after called home on the death of her father and living with her mother and that sister in Dublin, she was one day requesting her sister to get made up a splendid suit of silk which she had brought for that purpose from Paris; and she was both astonished and edified when her sister disposed of the silk to relieve a distressed family. Such an action, with the death of that sister soon after and her uncommon piety before it, wrought much on the heart of Miss Nagle and served to disengage it from the fashionable world which she had tasted and enjoyed until then. It was in such favourable dispositions that being in the country she was afflicted to discover the ignorance of the poor, which she principally perceived in one of the servants of the house whom she had conversed with on some points of religion. It was then she resolved that had she thousands she would dedicate them to the poor. But no prospect of that kind opening, she retired to a convent in France. And after understanding there the will of heaven, she returned to Ireland.

And her mother being then dead, Cork—where her brother resided—was blessed with the opening of her mission, as it has since been with the first house of the Order she instituted here. She hired a room convenient to her brother's, took in thirty wicked children with a mistress to take care of them but visited them constantly herself (and in a little time had schools in other parts of the City⁴⁰, unknown to her family till an accident one day discovered

³⁸ Catherine Callaghan, in religion, Mary Clare, was born in 1766 in the parish of St Mary, Shandon, Cork, of John Callaghan and his wife Mary Donovan; professed 1795, died 1847. She was the sister of Daniel Callaghan, one of the most prominent merchants of Cork in the first half of the last century. He was the John Manesty in Maginn's novel of that name.

³⁹ The letter contains a reference to the Presentation Convent at Kilkenny, founded in 1800. Mother Angela Collins died in 1804.

⁴⁰ A line is drawn through these words. This shows the care with which Mother Collins corrected Mother Callaghan's draft. We know from Nano Nagle herself that she started her second school only after her brother knew of her work. See Letter I, 5.

her employment to her brother.

Your Lordship's life of this venerable woman is much to be admired and very interesting. May it have the same influence on the hearts of others that it had on mine when first I read it. But I flatter myself were you writing it at the present day your Lordship would make some changes in it, particularly in the sixth line of the twenty-first page, where it is given to understand that all her exertions were pointed by God to reclaim the rich, and as such it really appeared at the time your Lordship wrote. But the little seed sown by the hand of Miss Nagle, though then hid from human observation has since sprung up and already sends forth six branches which afford shade and refreshment to thousands. She died on Monday 26th April, 1784, aged 66 or at least within a few months of it. She never bound herself by any vow. But it was her earnest desire that the Congregation of Charitable Instruction which she instituted and in the labours of which she spent her life, should be formed into a Religious Order. She often expressed to our Superioress the consolation she should feel could she see a second house established before her death. Such conversation she always closed by saying, "Ah! My Sister, be assured it will certainly flourish after our death." Her prediction was true. In the year 1791 the Bulls arrived for its establishment, and on the feast of the Assumption '93 the first profession was made in the first house of the Order under the name of the Presentation of Our Lady. Since that six houses are established, the members being at present 45 in number.

Your Lordship is acquainted, I suppose, with the high encomiums lately passed on this Order by his present Holiness and the Sacred Congregation; as our Constitutions are lately gone to Rome for confirmation and we daily expect them with the pleasing gratification of seeing this a confirmed religious Order, in which the life of Miss Nagle is exactly copied, having all our time employed either in instruction or in prayer. And the same preparation (of children) for the sacraments you speak of is still continued in it, with an hour's instruction every day in the year for adults. And never did I see such a constant succession of the miserable and the ignorant as at that hour's instruction, there being always from ten to twenty here at that time. There is besides an hour every Sunday evening devoted to the instruction of those whose labour prevents them of attending on weekdays. Which audience generally consists of about two hundred, which would be much increased had we any place large enough to contain them. Their eagerness for this instruction is such as often to fill up a part of our yard, not being able to press into the room for instruction. But it seems that every action of this great woman was to be productive of a hundredfold, for a plaster she applied to poor creatures afflicted with sores is still administered to them with most general spiritual advantage. The Sisters have informed me and I have myself seen since my entrance many conversions by this simple action of affording them bodily relief, as it gives the Sister who attends them an opportunity of inquiring into the state of their souls. And many we find who have been years, nay some their whole life, absent from the sacraments; but on being instructed [they] have indeed been afterwards models of penance. Of the houses established two are in Cork; one at George's Hill, Dublin; one in James's Street, Kilkenny; one in Hennessy's Road, Waterford; and one in Killarney, which ladies of respectability are constantly joining.

LETTER OF DR. TROY TO DR. MOYLAN

13th December, 1788

My ever dear and honoured Lord,

In my last letter to your Lordship of the 29th, answering yours of the 7th, I mentioned the opinions of my confrere lately assembled here concerning the vows to be taken by such as shall be aggregated to the pious institute planned by Miss Nagle and concluded by assuring your Lordship that the Institution would be established in this City in such a manner only as shall be approved by your Lordship and ratified by the Holy See. I have since had some deliberations on the subject with gentlemen of experience and penetration. They are apprehensive that nothing but solemn vows can give stability to the institution and think they may be taken at the canonical age prescribed by The Council of Trent. As this opinion seems well grounded and the Sisters are not to go abroad except to the schools or on business respecting the Institution, and as they are not to be entertained or sleep abroad, I hope that by the mercy of God and the assistance of His Grace, the occasions of disedification will be effectually removed. I, therefore, my dear Lord, waive the objections expressed in my said letter and leave the whole matter to the discussion and determination of the Holy See and your Lordship.

Dr. Troy to Dr. Moylan (from internal evidence).