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No. 1

SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF MOTHER CORNELIA CONNELLY FOUNDRESS OF THE SISTERS OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS 1809-1879

The plan of the following sketch was first suggested when the present writer found it necessary to gather information and verify facts referring to the Rev. Pierce Connelly in the making up and arranging of notes for the translated Letters of Bishop Francis Patrick Kenrick. A request for a few points of information about the later years of Pierce Connelly's life addressed to the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus at Sharon Hill disclosed the fact that there was a fund of tradition living in the memories of the older members of the Sisterhood, who treasure now with reverence what they recall of traits of character and personality, the words and the example of their loved and venerated Mother Foundress: facts of life, which they then, as Novices or junior Sisters, could not understand, which are explained now in the knowledge of hidden sorrow

and heroic courage, the proofs of divine call to suffer, to endure, to build a work influence for the future.

The sources from which the facts have been drawn, the framework of this sketch, are *first*, Periodicals, Directories, Yearbooks, current newspapers of the time, Philadelphia and London Publications 1831 to 1851. *Second*, the unpublished Memoirs of Mother Connelly's Life gathered and arranged by the Venerable Mother Mary Francis Bellasis. *Third*, the recollections of living Sisters who knew Mother Connelly personally and retain impressions of her first associates in the early days of the foundation. *Fourth*, the annuals and records of the Sisters in America and in England.

In the Rooms of the Pennsylvania Historical Society, Locust and Thirteenth Streets, Philadelphia, Pa., are copies in manuscript of the early records of Old Christ Church¹. In volume eight of these manuscript copies, page 4847, under the date of the first day of December, 1831, is the record of the marriage of Pierce Connelly and Cornelia Augusta Peacock. The marriage contract was made before the officiating rector of the church, the Right Reverend William White, who was also at this time Protestant Episcopal Bishop of the diocese of Pennsylvania.

There is nothing out of the ordinary in this official entry or its copy, nothing to indicate the future life-story of Pierce Connelly or Cornelia Augusta Peacock, nothing to mark off this particular union from several thousands of others there recorded. The record in its own place, in the list of names which precede and follow, is simply a reminder

¹Christ Church, on west side of Second Street above Market was founded in 1695. There is a short History of the Church by Rev. Benjamin Dorr, D. D., published in 1841. It contains lists, apparently complete, of Rectors and Assistant Rectors of the church down to 1841, and many official acts of Wardens and Trustees.

to us, an index of assurance in the sacred character of Christian Marriage, in the faith which sustains love and mutual fidelity and continues to build up new homes in the great heart of the human family.

But when we leave the material and official record and follow the story of these two lives as it was known, and in part recorded in the news items and public prints of two generations ago, as it has been treasured by those whose lifework now is linked inseparably with these two names, we find facts which claim notice and attention, facts of the spiritual and pathetic side of life which give to history all its human value, and help us to realize that the drama of human life is something beyond the thought, the aims and designs of the heart and mind of man.

Cornelia Augusta Peacock was born in Philadelphia on the fifteenth day of January, 1809. The residence of her father, Ralph Peacock, an import merchant grocer, is given in the city directory of that year, at number one, Filbert Street. This was near the Delaware water front, and at that time a select section of respectable homes, now, and for many years past, the home almost exclusively of wholesale warehouses. Cornelia was the youngest of six children, Dodsworth, Ralph, Mary, Adeline and George. The mother, however, whose maiden name was Mary Swope, had been married before to a Mr. Bowen of Bowen Hall in the Island of Jamaica. There was a daughter by this former marriage, Isabella, who later married a Mr. Montgomery. After the death of the mother, in 1833, Cornelia made her home with this half-sister,² but at the time of the marriage, 1831, it appears that she lived with another sister, Mrs. Louis Duval³ (Adeline).

² Philadelphia city Directories for the thirties give the residence of Mr. Austin Montgomery at 252 Mulberry St. The Mulberry of 1830 is now Arch Street.

³ In the reports of the court trials in England, 1850, to test the legal

Pierce Connelly was born in Philadelphia, August 9, 1804. It has been thought that he was assistant rector of Christ Church at the time of his marriage with Cornelia Peacock in 1831; but his name does not appear in the lists of Rectors and Assistant Rectors in Dorr's *History of Christ Church*, 1841; neither is the name to be found in *The Early Clergy of Pennsylvania and Delaware*, by S. F. Hotchkin, Philadelphia, 1890. In the *City Directories* for these years the writer has also failed to find the name Pierce Connelly. A probable solution may be that Mr. Connelly was trained for the ministry in England, as he is said to have been "duly consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury," that, returning to his home city, he exercised the offices of the church there, though not officially appointed at Christ Church; and thus met his future bride, who was a member of the choir and sang at the services in the historic Old Church.

A short time after their marriage, early in 1832, the newly married couple removed to Natchez, Mississippi, where Pierce Connelly had been assigned Rector of the Protestant Episcopal Church under the jurisdiction of Dr. Ortey, then Episcopalian Bishop of Tennessee. It is a fact to be noted here that in 1832 there was not a resident Catholic priest in the city of Natchez. There was a Catholic chapel remaining from the days of the Spanish and French regime, but only one priest in the diocese, a wandering missionary Father Brogard, when the first bishop, John Joseph Chanche was consecrated for the See, in 1841.

From 1832 to the late summer or the fall of 1835 the Connells made their home in Natchez. There were born their first two children, Mercer, December 7, 1832, Adeline, March 6, 1835.

right of Mother Connelly's claim to separation, it is stated that the marriage was performed in Philadelphia, at the home of Mr. Louis Duval according to the rites and ceremonies of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

We probably shall never know just what the occasions were, what the circumstances in detail, which first moved Pierce Connelly and his wife to study the teachings of the Catholic Faith, a study which convinced them of the claims of Mother Church, opened the way to the one fold of visible unity, and later brought them to the thought of higher ideals, of devoting life individually, under the influence of a divine call, to the Apostolic work of "teaching all nations."

One point, in the way of divine providence, which was recalled later and treasured by the venerable foundress in her own religious and community life, was their observation of a strange and mysterious building,⁴ which upon inquiry proved to be the convent home of a Catholic Sisterhood. This information led to further inquiry and a sincere study of the then much misunderstood subject of Catholic convent life, the popular, absurd myths of the time, anti-Catholic literary caricatures of the aims and the work of "nunneries."

The statements made by Mr. Connelly in his letter of resignation addressed to Bishop Ortey seem to confirm this impression, that it was not evidence in favor of the Church, but the unfair, anti-Catholic tracts and onesided controversies which first led to the study of the Catholic side of the question. Pierce Connelly's letter has historic interest in the facts which he states, also the peculiar psychology of his

⁴ This convent building probably was observed on occasion of a visit to New Orleans or St. Louis or Louisville, where the two new American Sisterhoods, Sisters of Charity of Loreto and Sisters of Charity of Nazareth had been established and at work since 1812. There was, so far as is known, no Convent building in Natchez at this time. The subject was one of peculiar interest at the time, stimulated, as it naturally would be, by the violent agitation against Catholic ideals, and the virulent publications, evidences of the spirit of fanaticism and hate at its worst. *Six Months in a Convent* was published in 1834, *Maria Monk* in 1836, Lyman Beecher was active, lecturing and writing, the Charlestown Convent was destroyed by a mob of crazed bigots, Aug. 11, 1834.

style. I shall quote parts of it from the reprint in the *Catholic Herald*, January 6, 1836:

TO THE RIGHT REVEREND DR. ORTEY, BISHOP OF TENNESSEE.

Dear Bishop, my truly honored and Right Reverend friend and Father:

I know the grief that what I am going to tell you will create; but I know too, that you will respect the integrity and frankness of the course which I adopt. The attacks from every quarter upon the Roman Catholic Church have forced me into a laborious study of the controversy, and, I confess, my faith is shaken in the Protestant religion. I have resigned my parish, my kind, my generous parish, and have laid aside the active functions of my profession to weigh deliberately and devoutly my future duty. I know how great a sacrifice I make of feeling as well as interest, I know how much greater a one I may still have to make, and indeed all to which I have exposed myself. I pretend not to say where the truth will lead me. I only am persuaded of my present duty, and am determined, by the help of God, to follow it

Do not suppose, dear Bishop, my present feelings are any momentary impulse. They are the result of anxious study, they have given me many sleepless nights, and brought me low in health. And do not think I have been led to them by novel or exterior influence. I have read not one of the recent publications of the Roman Catholics, and certainly, nearly all against them.

I have had no communication on the subject with any clergyman or layman of their Church; nor have I consulted on the step I now take with any human being whatever. It is from a most *ex parte* Protestant examination of the subject that I have come to the doubts and the conclusions which I now send you. The subject, moreover, is forced upon me solely by our own church, and her vociferous terrors in England and at home.

You will not doubt my faithfulness, do not fear my rashness. My first object will be to inform myself more fully of the doc-

trines, discipline and worship of the Roman Catholic Church as established by received General Councils, and learned arguments by which they are sustained. My next to compare, so far as shall be in my power, the operation in Roman Catholic Communities with that of the Protestants in theirs.

In bidding farewell to my dear parish and to yourself, my beloved and honored friend and father, I start a pilgrim in search of the truth. . . . In humble imitation of Saint Peter's obedience to the Angel, I cast my garment about me and follow what, in the fear of God, I believe to be the call of duty.

Your ever faithful and ever humble son and servant

PIERCE CONNELLY.

Natchez, Aug. 26, 1835.

In the month of December of this same year, 1835, the Connells were in New Orleans on the way to Rome with their two children, Mercer, aged four, Adeline less than a year old. An unexpected delay in the sailing of the vessel on which they had taken passage was an occasion which brought Cornelia Connelly to a decision, a point of practical religion which seems to reveal a temperament, a natural disposition quite different from that of her husband. Directed by the counsel of the Bishop of New Orleans (later, 1850, Archbishop) Antony Blanc, Cornelia Connelly was received into the Church, made her profession of faith and received her first Holy Communion⁵ from the

⁵ An inquiry for information about the date of Mother Connelly's reception into the Church was made, but failed in results. The writer received the following letter. "New Orleans, July 15, 1919—Dear Sir: The case of Mother Cornelia Connelly was submitted to the Fathers at St. Louis' Cathedral, and they looked over the RECORDS for the record of Baptism, and find no record of the same. They also looked over the Records of St. Mary's Church, but find no trace of the same. Very sincerely yours, A. J. Bruerning, Chancellor."

See account of profession of faith and Holy Communion in *Cath. Herald*, Jan. 14, 1836. A letter of John Connelly, brother of Pierce, also a convert, and always after a loyal Catholic, quotes Bishop Blanc, saying that he would never forget the tears of joyful emotion which he saw streaming down Cornelia Connelly's face when he gave her her first Holy Communion.

hand of the Bishop of New Orleans before setting sail for Europe. Her husband was present in the church at the time, but preferred to wait to make his own public submission in Rome.

The Connells reached Rome February 25, 1836, and on Sunday March the seventh⁶ Pierce Connelly made his profession of faith and was received into the Church. On March (April?) the eleventh both together received the Sacrament of Confirmation. They remained in Europe until January, 1838. Reverses of fortune, the "hard times" in America of 1837, made it imperative to return to the United States to take care of business interests and temporal affairs.

During their stay of nearly two years in Europe the Connells travelled some, and were honored, it appears, by representatives of culture and refinement in the Old World. During the summer of 1836 Pierce Connelly visited England with the Earl of Shrewsbury. It was probably on the occasion of this stay in England that the brief account of Connelly's conversion was written for the *Dublin Review* (See *Dublin Rev.* July, 1836, Supplement).

Rome was threatened by an epidemic of cholera in the spring of 1837. The Connelly family left Rome during May, 1837, and visited Florence, Bologna, Venice, Vnenna. At Vienna the family circle was increased by the birth of their third child, June 22, whom they named John Henry.

Financial conditions from sources in America seem to have been quite secure for the first eighteen months' sojourn in Europe. There is a letter preserved in the *Memoirs* which may serve to indicate these American resources. It shows us also a sincerely spiritual and religious

⁶ In one of the reports of the separation trial, 1851, it is stated that Pierce Connelly was received into the Church, March 7 (Palm Sunday), 1836. The memoirs give Maunday Thursday as the day of Confirmation. Palm Sunday could not come so early as March 7. In 1836, the date of Palm Sunday was March 27. This probably is the date of Pierce Connelly's reception into the Church.

side of Pierce Connelly's life at this time, interesting chiefly in view of later developments. The letter was written from Rome in 1836, and is addressed to John Connelly at Natchez, the brother of Pierce. The brother was at this time not a Catholic, though later, in 1841, he came into the Church and persevered with his family, a loyal Catholic despite the disappointed hopes of his brother. The letter complains of the apparent neglect of friends in America for their convert relatives abroad:— “I suppose I need not ask why none of you write to us. It seems as if we ought not to look for it. God knows how often our hearts are with you, and that we love you none the less. It can not be that you have lost all affection for either of us. I know how well you used to think of the Catholic religion, and I do not fear the results, for I believe you were in earnest in reading *Milner's End of Controversy*—Great God, what a happy, blessed thing is true religion! What a miserable substitute for it are the inventions of Luther, Calvin, Henry VIII!” He then goes on to advise his brother (a non-Catholic) to “get up a Catholic Chapel” in Natchez, on the property of the family, “no matter how rude. The men would get into the habit of coming to Mass, and you would soon see the whole place more cheerful and decent and orderly. It would be such an excellent thing for the poor people employed in the factory, and for their children, and indeed for the happiness of all of you. None of us but have many sins to be sorry for; and, if it were only as a set-off against these, it would be well worth all the little trouble and money it would cost. It would bring a blessing on you, for it really seems to me that God seldom allows either an act of charity done to Catholics, or of respect to His religion to go, even in this world, without its reward.”

Letters written during the summer and fall of 1837 show a growing solicitude about financial affairs in America and

dread of impending ruin. A letter written from Paris in October, 1837, asks the brother, John Connelly, to find some position of employment and support. They are preparing to return to America. Cornelia is delighted at the prospect of coming home again, Pierce Connelly is ready to accept employment, as he tells his brother, either as clerk in a bank, an overseer on a plantation or a teacher in a school.

The Connells left Europe (the port is not given) November 7, 1837, and reached New Orleans January 7, 1838, sixty-one days crossing the ocean. There is a letter written from New Orleans on the day of their landing in which Mr. Connelly says to his brother: "We hope to be with you at Natchez as soon as this letter, provided we can get out of the hands of the Custom House Officers Cornelia and the children are very well. She is more rejoiced than I can say over our return to our *peaceful quiet home life*." But farther on he adds: "She can look ahead bravely to coming—I must not say storms—but times when we may find ourselves without a home."

What the pecuniary losses were in particular which brought the Connells home to Natchez, and left them there apparently without the security of a home of their own, we do not know. It is not within the scope of this sketch to search out the causes of the unnumbered financial failures of 1837 to 1841. The money loss meant for the future foundress a first taste of the life of sacrifice. It meant that Pierce Connelly and his wife must now of their own energy and genius provide a home and support for their little family with no dependence on former sources of wealth or the social standing which wealth can command.

From January to June, 1838, it appears that the Connells remained in Natchez. In June of that year arrangements had been completed with the Fathers of the Society of Jesus to have Mr. Connelly teach English Literature

and Rhetoric in the College of St. Charles at Grand Coteau, Louisiana. June 24, 1838, the Connells with their three little children took possession of a cottage, not far from the College of St. Charles, but a part of the Convent property of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, who still conduct the Academy and School for girls established at Grand Coteau by Madame Duchesne in 1821. The little cottage with its grounds received the name *Gracemere*. From this peaceful little home Pierce Connelly entered upon his work, teaching in St. Charles.⁷ The future Mother Foundress also, apart from her home duties and the care of her three little ones, found time to give lessons in music and to direct the course in music at the Academy of the Sacred Heart. In later times in England, Mother Connelly used to speak of the years at Gracemere as the happiest of her married life.

At Gracemere a fourth child was born, a little girl, July 22, 1839. She was baptized in the Convent chapel by Bishop Blanc, and given the name, in honor of the Saint of her birthday, Mary Magdalen. This baby's life was very short. She died September 10, 1839.

The year 1840 brought two great trials into the life of Cornelia Connelly, tests of virtue and endurance in the great mystery of human suffering. The first of these came at the end of January of that year, the death by scalding of her youngest child (now since the death of the baby, Mary Magdalen), John Henry, the little lad born in Vienna, June, 1837—The description is preserved in Mother Connelly's own notes, and tells briefly how this beautiful child two and a half years of age was playing on the premises with a large Newfoundland dog. This big animal running playfully against his little human companion threw him

⁷ His name will be found in the Catholic Directories, 1839-1840, Professor of English Literature and Rhetoric.

over, and the child fell into a large cauldron of boiling maple syrup, which was being reduced, as was the custom, on the premises, from maple-sap to sugar for domestic use. The poor little sufferer lived, and opened the way to his mother to endure suffering, for forty-three hours after the accident. In Mother Connelly's own notes the entry stands: "At early dawn on the feast of the Purification he was taken into the Temple of the Lord." This appears to have been the first great sorrow of Cornelia Connelly's life. It was of short duration. Unlike the crosses of her later life, this remained only a memory when the little sufferer had breathed his last. The second great trial came in October, the thirteenth, the feast of Saint Edward the Confessor, a day ever after treasured in the memory of the Mother Foundress, and still observed by her spiritual children, the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus as the day of "*Foundation*."

It was on this day that Pierce Connelly first revealed to his wife what he believed to be the promotings of divine grace, the call to be a priest, to devote the remaining years of his life to the office and work of Apostolic ministry in the Church. They were walking home from Mass in the Convent chapel, as was their custom, when Pierce Connelly disclosed this secret of his vocation to his wife. It was not a sudden impulse. It was the subject of long thought and deliberation on which he had sought the counsel of his spiritual director. In her long years of suffering later in England, Cornelia Connelly often recalled this fact, and thanked God that the *call* came *first* to him, that the suggestion was his, when she had no thought of separation.

Mrs. Connelly must have known the character, temper and disposition of her husband, as these are manifest in his letters, and in the conduct of his later life. She must have known his natural generosity and enthusiasm, excellent qualities when rightly controlled, his insistence on his own judgment, the habit of *justifying* his own views and fixed

ideas. This knowledge of Pierce Connelly's character, and the dread of an element of pride, of misguided zeal, of self, in this vocation to the priesthood, must have been factors of difficulty and pain in the heart of the wife and mother when she was asked to make a life's decision. There was the prospect, moreover, of a lifelong sacrifice, of giving up her happy peaceful home, of resigning a mother's greatest consolation, the care and training of her children. Added to this is the fact that the suggestion was made only a few weeks before the birth of their last child. Yet, judging from later events, and from the cherished remembrance of this day, it appears that Cornelia Connelly then made the decision of her life, the deliberate choice to offer all that was most dear to her on earth on condition that Pierce Connelly's desire proved a divine call. Speaking in confidence to some of her spiritual children in later years, she was wont to say that the beginning of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus was on this feast of St. Edward, and that it was founded on a "*breaking heart.*"

Eighteen months passed in the peaceful little home at Gracemere after this first suggestion of separation before Pierce Connelly found a way to enter upon his plans to follow a vocation, which he, his wife, their friends and counselors evidently believed to be a divine call to the priesthood. Through the kind intervention of the Earl of Shrewsbury, whom the Connells had met in Rome in 1836, and whose friendship and confidence they enjoyed, a position was secured in which Pierce Connelly was to act as traveling companion to Mr. Berkely of Spetchley, one of an old English Catholic family. They were to travel on the continent; this would open a way to visit Rome, to get the advice and the practical judgment of canonists and ecclesiastics there.

On the fifth day of May, 1842, Pierce Connelly left Gracemere for England. The oldest child, Mercer, now a

boy of nine, went with the father to enter the Jesuit School at Stonyhurst. The two younger children, Adeline, now six years old, and the last born, less than two, remained with their mother in a little cottage on the convent grounds, known as the "bishop's cottage." Gracemere was left vacant. In this trial of separation, the breaking up of her home, the sacrifice of natural affection, we can find one consoling feature at least in a heart of sympathy that was near and could understand. The oldest sister of the family, Mary Frances Peacock, was then a novice in the Sacred Heart Convent at Grand Coteau. She had been received into the Church on the occasion of a visit to Gracemere, the day after the death of the little boy, John Henry, February 2, 1840. On the same day, February 3, 1840, Bishop Blanc gave her her first Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Confirmation. She was received into the Convent as a postulant June 18, 1841 after a retreat which the two sisters made together, a study of spiritual life and vocation.⁸

⁸ Madame Mary Frances Peacock was later, while still a novice, transferred to McSherrystown, Pennsylvania, subsequently to the school on Logan Square, Philadelphia, Pa., thence to Eden Hall in 1847 where she was in charge of higher classes. She made her final vows at Manhattanville, Dec. 8, 1848, was superior successively in the Convents at Halifax, Albany, St. Louis and Chicago. She came to Philadelphia as Assistant Superior in 1867. In 1870 Mother Peacock was appointed superior of the Convent in Rochester, N. Y., where she died, December 24, 1871 (from a letter of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, Eden Hall to F. E. T., Sept. 9, 1919). All the other members of Mother Connally's family (Peacock) became Catholics, excepting Ralph, the oldest brother. One at least of two brothers, of Pierce Connally, John, became a Catholic, and persevered notwithstanding the disappointment of Pierce Connally's later years. There is a letter of John Connally written to the Sisters in England on occasion of the death of their Mother Foundress in 1879, which deserves a place here. I quote from the *Memoirs*. . . "On the 23d of July, 1841, in the Chapel of St. Mary's College of the Jesuit Fathers, Kentucky, I was received into the Church and baptized by the Rev. Father W. S. Murphy, S. J. The following Sunday, in the Chapel of Loreto I made my First Communion and received Confirmation at the hands of the saintly

There are some points of interest in the letters written by Pierce Connelly during this first period of separation. One dated from England, Alton Towers (the home of the Earl of Shrewsbury in Staffordshire), July 14, 1842, is addressed to his brother, John Connelly, at Natchez. He tells his brother that the boy, Mercer, has been placed at School with the Jesuits at Stonyhurst. "The only thing to be wished," he says, "is that he could see now and then his blessed little mother, and rest under the sweet influence of her holy example. The happiest hours I have spent since I left home were those when I took Cornelia's place, and said the Rosary and the Litany of Our Lady and the rest of our prayers with the little fellow." In this letter he says that he has sent flower seeds for his wife and Madame Cutts (Superior of Sacred Heart Convent Grand Coteau). He speaks of their brother George not yet a Catholic: "I mean our brother George to take Cornelia north (perhaps to Philadelphia) next year. I can truly say I find my only consolation in the Church, and my happy hours before the Blessed Sacrament. I hope to be in Munich before the end of October, and in Rome by the end of November."

There are some letters from the mother to Mercer at Stonyhurst—she calls him *Merty*, and the two little ones with her *Ady* and *Frank*. These letters show us the love and heart of a mother; but throughout express what we can almost feel in reading them, a wonderful spiritual refinement.

Bishop Flaget, and with his consent married (probably later) a protestant lady. Shortly after our marriage I took her to Grand Coteau, where we remained till Easter, 1842. Thanks be to the Good God my object in taking her there was attained. Through the kind and careful instruction, and, above all, by the sweet and holy example of my sister-in-law (Cornelia Connelly), Angelica became a Catholic, lived true and devoted to her religion, and died a most holy death in 1856. . . . It was on this visit that I saw most of my brother's saintly wife, and your blessed Mother Foundress. It was then and there the strong affection grew up between us, which, lasted, I hope, till her death."

an insight of character, a knowledge of human nature and its frailty which reveal an exceptional personality gifted by nature and grace. In one of these letters written in 1843 to Merty (then aged eleven) she is analysing what the boy has evidently told her of some school companion. "F.", she says, "is a nice boy—he feels more for his brothers and sisters than for himself, and has no vanity nor flash about him. Some are too proud to be vain. Now this is a form of pride, that, if I dare like any sort of pride, I should be tempted to like." In another letter "our passions are of no consequence, you know, provided we only govern them, and do not let them govern us I bless you, my dear boy, as you go to bed, as if I were close by you, and you have only to whisper to your Guardian Angel to put a little cross on your forehead for me." A last example is one of motherly correction and gentle advice. The lad had evidently asked his mother for pocket-money to be forwarded surreptitiously: "Now, my dear boy, go to the Father Rector, and explain with openness why you wished me to put the money in the cocoa. If you wished to hide it, why ask for it? Explain this to me with courage and generosity; and, if there is anything to make you feel ashamed about it, do the penance. That will cure you of ever doing the smallest action that will savor of deception."

During the early days of July, 1843, Mrs. Connelly received a letter from her husband informing her that her presence was required at Rome. She was to meet him in England without delay. In four days she had made all preparations, and on July 13, 1843 she writes to her brothers-in-law, John and George Connelly, arranging to meet them as she passed up the Mississippi and Ohio on the way to Philadelphia. Writing to John at Natchez, she says: "Dear John. You will no doubt be much surprised to know that we are on our way to Philadelphia Ady and Frank are both well I go to New Orleans first to

arrange our affairs, but will start from there as soon as possible, and in the best boat—perhaps stay there one day; so be on the watch for us." To the other brother she writes: "Dear George: I send a letter to tell you that we are off. I hope to meet you at Natchez or Vicksburg . . . I send one to Port Gibson at the same time, to make *more* sure of you, and one also to John at Vicksburg. Ever your affectionate sister C. C."

There is no further information about this voyage over the Atlantic. It is certain however that the whole party, Mr. and Mrs. Connelly and the children, were at Alton Towers, the guests of the Earl of Shrewsbury in August, 1843. In October they were in Paris. They did not reach Rome until December 7, 1843.

It is quite evident that the attitude of Cornelia Connelly to the problem of separation from its first suggestion, in October, 1840, was one of humble and docile submission to the design of divine providence, not to allow the sole interests of self, her love of home, her children, her affection for Pierce Connelly to stand in the way of the divine call, if this should prove a divine call to the priesthood. She has left on record no word of enthusiasm, no expression of feeling or sentiment to encourage her husband in his plans. The *notes* which she made during spiritual retreats at Grand Coteau, and now in March, 1844, in the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Rome, show us only a gentle resolve to suffer, to endure what God wills for the good of others, to walk in His way, "the royal way of the cross." In the retreat in Rome, March, 1844, she wrote this *note*, which reveals her heart's decision, and seems like a foregleam of her future work for schools and Christian ideals of education in England and America: "If, O my God, Thou art pleased to place me in religious life, I offer myself to Thee, to suffer in my heart with Thee, and for Thee, not to do my will, but Thine, in the will of my superiors." At the end of this

note she has written: "They who teach others shall shine as stars in heaven!!!'" (Daniel, XII-3).

There is a letter written from Rome by Pierce Connelly to his brother John, dated St. Patrick's Day, 1844, which shows how the case then stood, and reviews some facts of the past four years.

"Long before the holy Bishop Flaget spoke to you of his desire that Cornelia and I should give ourselves wholly to God, we had already taken our resolution in the Autumn if 1840 My journey to England, as you may suppose, was really with a view to the same I had agreed to pass some years with Lord Shrewsbury, and Cornelia with the Princess Borghese, but now, within the last month, the Pope has approved of the thing, and everything is determined. His Holiness sent for the Cardinal Vicar the day before yesterday, and told him he dispensed with all letters dispensary from America, and that His Eminence might give me Minor Orders immediately, that this will perhaps be done before the end of Lent, and Cornelia at the same time will enter the Convent of the Sacred Heart, not as a Novice, but only as a postulant, remaining at liberty so long as Frank has need of her."⁹ He reminds his brother that all this is told in confidence, that their plans were not known in America, that not even Mary Peacock, Cornelia's sister, had any knowledge of the intended separation.

Some time between the writing of this letter, March 17, and April 9, the Connellys with their two younger children, Adeline and Frank, were called for a private audience with the Pope, Gregory XVI. The result of this audience was the Pope's decision that Pierce Connelly was to retire to the *Collegio dei Nobili* and pursue his studies for the ecclesiastical state. Mrs. Connelly with the two children was to reside in the Convent of the Sacred Heart, the *Trinità*.

⁹ Adeline had been placed as a boarder in the Sacred Heart Convent, *Trinità dei Monti*—December 17, 1843.

Little Frank and his nurse were to have a little house in the Convent garden, and the child was to remain under the mother's supervision.

April ninth, 1844, Easter Monday, is the date, as copied in the original French, from the Convent Journal, on which Mrs. Connelly took up her residence in the Sacred Heart Convent of the *Trinita* as a postulant. The deed of separation had been drawn up formally and signed on the first day of April, Monday of Holy Week, 1844. During this same Holy Week Pierce Connelly put on the clerical dress and entered the *Collegio dei Nobili* as a student. May first 1844 he received minor Orders in the Convent Chapel of the *Trinita*. On the twenty-second day of June, 1845, Pierce Connelly was ordained sub-deacon in the same Convent Chapel. Three days before, June 18, Cornelia had signed the formal record of her solemn vow of perpetual chastity. A week later, June 29, Pierce Connelly received the Order of Deacon, and July 6, 1845 he was ordained to the priesthood. His first Mass was celebrated July 7, in the Convent Chapel. At this Mass the little Adeline received her first Holy Communion from the hand of her father, and Cornelia (probably from behind the Convent grill) sang "*Tu es sacerdos in aeternum.*"

Was this ordination of Pierce Connelly an error of judgment, a mistake from motives of misguided zeal? Or were the events which developed four years later altogether the result of stubborn pride and a temperamentally unbalanced or ill-balanced mind? Surely there must have been men, conscientious and observing, to counsel and advise, men to read characters and to judge personal worth in the face and the outer life of Pierce Connelly. Wherever the responsibility is placed, Cornelia Connelly seems to be clearly free of blame. She submits trustingly, uncomplainingly to the judgment of others to whom she has good reason to look for safe guidance. Whether we place the burden of re-

sponsibility here, or later, limit it to the pride and stubbornness of Pierce Connelly's will to be master, Cornelia is the victim. She suffers the consequence of the blunder. She pays the price of the human error in patient, silent, uncomplaining suffering; but as always in the great tragedy of human life and history, her recompense is the triumph of right: "*Et ideo vicit quia victima*" (St. Aug. Confess., X-43).

The facts in detail which led up to the choice of England as the future field of labor and life-work of Cornelia Connelly were probably never minutely noted down or made the subject of particular record. From the few facts known it seems that the work took shape and grew almost independently, without elaborate plans of its human factors. There was, firstly, the need of Christian schools in the great industrial and commercial centers, the manufacturing towns of England. Secondly, only uncloistered communities could meet practically and solve effectively this problem of education for the middle classes and the working population. Thirdly, it was one of the great objects of Bishop (later Cardinal) Wiseman's life to introduce religious communities to take the place, and to do the work of the monastic schools of the days of Catholic England, to turn the tide of irreligion, prejudice and disbelief, where anti-Catholic feeling had been the ruling passion since the time of Elizabeth. The jurisdiction of Wiseman, then Coadjutor to the Vicar Apostolic of the "Midland District," Bishop Thomas Walsh, extended over Staffordshire, the home of the Earl of Shrewsbury, the friend and patron of the Connelllys and Derbyshire the future first home of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus. There is a fourth fact recorded in the *Memoirs*, evidently from the venerable Foundress' own statement, that it was the judgment of Pope Gregory XVI, given in a personal interview, probably by way of counsel and advice, "that she was not called to join any then existing order;

but that she had a vocation to do a great work in God's Church" naturally and quite instinctively the mind of the Foundress would turn to her native land in her plans for the work of the new Institute. America, where she first had received the blessings of faith, among her own, would be the first field suggested for the future work of those whose labors she was to direct. But here again the judgment of the Pope determined her choice and the decision in favor of England. "From England," he said, "let your efforts for Catholic education reach America." A fifth fact is, I believe, to be admitted in the advantages and encouragement which England just then offered, the moral and the material support of the Earl of Shrewsbury as patron of the undertaking and Bishop Wiseman as its ecclesiastical guide and support. No assurance or encouragement like these could be found in the United States, where anti-Catholic feeling had just shown itself in the "*Nativist*" spasms of eighteen hundred and forty-four.

Cornelia Connelly's relations with the Religious of the Sacred Heart in the Convent of *Trinità*, where she had resided nominally as a postulant for nearly two years, were evidently most cordial. Her own sister, Mary Frances Peacock was one of their community in America. She herself had taught in the Academy and practically found her home in the Convent at Grand Coteau, 1839 to 1843. She had here, in the *Trinità*, the care and instruction of English converts and visitors, and evidently the confidence of the Religious, who have recorded in the Convent Journal the fact that they were edified by her example of regular and religious observance. But Cornelia Connelly's calling was, as is seen in the result, for the work of the uncloistered Sisterhoods, a work of Christian education peculiar to the conditions of modern times, which demand at once the devotedness, the loyalty to the Counsels, the life of sacrifice of the uncloistered religious, and the actual interest of con-

tact with the children or our generation; a mingling with their young charges which will keep before them the influence of example and the power of practical religion. The call came from England and Cornelia Connelly trusting in Providence followed it.

There is a letter written by Cornelia Connelly to her brother-in-law, John Connelly in America from "Chez les Dames de l'Assomption—Chaillot," without date, but evidently some time during the summer of 1846, as she speaks of the death of the Pope, Gregory XVI and the election of Pius IX. She had left Rome in April, the eighteenth (thirty-three years to the day before her death in 1879). She is on her way to England with her two younger children, Ady and Frank, who are eager to meet their brother Merty in England. She expects to leave Paris in August, going to the Berkeleys at Spetchley Park, there her future course¹⁰ will be decided.

Pierce Connelly writes to his brother, John, August 17, 1846, from Alton Towers, that "Cornelia is expected in England to-morrow." He says that he has not seen her since she left Rome in April, does not expect to see her until she is settled in a Convent. He is taking Merty as far as Derby to-morrow on his way to join his mother and the two younger children at Birmingham.

It was at Birmingham early in the month of October, 1846 that Mrs. Connelly parted from her children. Merty was to return to the Jesuits at Stonyhurst; Ady was placed with the Nuns of the Holy Sepulchre, New Hall Chelmsford; Frank was given to the care of Mrs. Nicholson's school for small boys, Hampstead,¹¹ London. These schools

¹⁰ Pierce Connelly had secured a place as Chaplain at Alton Towers during this same summer, and was at this time in England engaged in the work of the priesthood.

¹¹ For schools where the children were placed see *Catholic Herald*, Dec. 17, 1846—Letter of Pierce Connelly—reprinted from *Catholic Telegraph*.

were evidently the choice of their father. This probably was one of the most painful trials of Cornelia's life. It was the final offering of the sacrifice which she saw in prospect ever since Pierce Connelly's first proposal to separate, at Grand Coteau in 1840, before her youngest child was born. One who observed her then, who was later one of her first associates in religious life, and labored forty-six years as a Sister of the Holy Child Jesus in England and America, Sister Aloysia, has told her impressions in the *Memoirs*: "It was at this time I first knew her," she says, "and I watched her as I would a Saint: so patient, so gentle. I wondered how she could be so very calm and peaceful Peace seems to be a virtue she possessed herself, and valued very much in others."

It was Cardinal, (then Bishop) Wiseman, coadjutor to Bishop Thomas Walsh of the "Midland District," who determined the first field of work for the proposed new Sisterhood. It was he also who decided that Cornelia Connelly should direct the work from its first beginnings, that she frame the Rule and ordinances for the new Community, that she, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, must be her own "Novice Mistress," and take upon herself the responsibilities of "Foundress."

In a letter which must have been written, at the latest, early in October, 1846, Bishop Wiseman addresses Mother Connelly and two associates who had joined her in Birmingham as "My dear Daughters in Christ Jesus," he assigns their work and their first Community residence in Derby, then as now, a busy industrial center for the manufacture porcelain and silk. "The field which you have chosen", he tells them, "for the exercise of spiritual mercies is indeed vast and almost boundless, but it presents the richest soil, and promise of the most abundant returns. The middle classes, until now almost neglected in England, form the mass and staple of our society. They are the '*Higher Classes*' of

our great congregations They have to provide us with our priesthood, our confraternities, our working religious. To train the future mothers of this class is to sanctify entire families, and sow the seeds of piety in whole congregations May God prosper and bless you and your work; may He fill you with His consolations, making you His faithful handmaids for the good of His holy Church.

"I am ever sincerely and affectionately yours in Christ.
N. WISEMAN."

TO THE SISTERS OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS

The first home of the Sisters in Derby was part of a "foundation," a splendid pile of Gothic structure, including a Convent and Chapel, with church, presbytery and schools, designed by Pugin, the famous restorer of Gothic architecture in England, built at the expense of Lady Beaumont, a convert, the daughter of Lord Lonsdale. From the first the "splendid edifice" described by Bishop Wiseman did not appeal to the taste and ideas of Mother Connelly. She is said to have exclaimed when first she saw the beautiful buildings: "We shall never stay here; this is not Bethlehem."

It was the thirteenth of October, 1846, the feast of St. Edward, the anniversary of the day of "*Foundation*" at Grand Coteau in 1840, that Cornelia Connelly with three companions, after Mass and Holy Communion in the Chapel of the Sisters of Mercy in Birmingham, set out for the new undertaking in Derby. That same evening these four took possession of their new Convent home. At this time they wore no distinctive religious habit, only the plain dress designed by Mother Connelly, which is still the uniform worn by postulants for the Sisterhood. The habit of the Sisters was also designed later by the Mother Foundress, severely plain with nothing to draw attention from the non-Catholic, and often anti-Catholic surroundings of their work in

England.¹² On the sixteenth day of December, 1846, Mother Connelly received the habit and the white veil of religion at the hands of Bishop Wiseman. She then entered formally upon her probation and novitiate to establish the Sisterhood of the Holy Child Jesus. This evidently was carrying out the counsel of Gregory XVI—that she was not to enter any existing order of religious women; and was yet called to do a great work in the Church. Bishop Wiseman assigned the beginning of that work, placed her, a Novice, the “Novice Mistress” of a new Community; and a year later, December 21, 1847, confirmed his previous action, when he received her first profession of religious vows, and recognized her right, as religious superior, the only professed nun in the new foundation, to receive the submission and obedience of her associates, a community then of about twenty white-veiled novices.

The work of the new community at Derby was *first* the care of the parish school with an attendance of about two hundred children—*Second*, a night school was opened for those who could not attend the day school. *Thirdly*, instructions were given to factory girls who could not attend during school hours. *Fourth*, the regular Sunday school for Christian doctrine. In 1847 a boarding school was opened with the usual high-school and Academy branches, and thorough courses in English and French.

The Derby foundation, however, was destined, it seems, to be only a temporary home. Mother Cornelia’s words—“We shall never stay here: This is not Bethlehem”—proved true. From letters written to Mother Connelly during the summer of 1848, after Bishop Wiseman had quite certainly been transferred from the Midlands to the London

¹² The habit of the Sisters remains still the same as then designed, with some minor changes only in the width of sleeves and the veil. The silver cross and the ring, a crucifix circlet, were approved by Pius IX, when Mother Connelly visited Rome in 1854.

district to succeed Bishop Griffiths, it appears that the Convent property at Derby had been burdened by financial obligations. It was used, evidently as security to raise money for the relief of converts, with the assurance of help for the same purpose from Rome and the Association for the Propagation of Faith in Paris. This debt could be controlled without inconvenience to the Sisters so long as Bishop Wiseman remained in the Midland district. But the change of regime brought with it complications, which were not foreseen, as appears from these letters, and which neither Bishop Ullathorne, Wiseman's successor in the Midlands, nor the Sisters could control. In consequence of these financial difficulties it was agreed, with Bishop Ullathorne's consent, though he was loath to lose the services of the Sisters, that the little community should accept the offer of a new foundation at St. Leonards-on-Sea, a watering place near Hastings in Sussex within the jurisdiction of Bishop Wiseman's new field of labor. The change was made and the little Community was settled in its new home at St. Leonard's just before Christmas, 1848.

It is impossible now to trace the beginnings in detail of Pierce Connelly's cruel conduct toward his wife and her new religious foundation in England during the years 1848 to 1851, and the apparently insane course of the later years of his life. It is not improbable however that the financial difficulties, the burdening of the Convent property at Derby, for which the Mother Foundress had been in no way responsible, may have been an opening wedge. It is evident from Pierce Connelly's letters that his attitude toward the future Cardinal Wiseman was one of determined antagonism. As early as the summer of 1847, during Mother Cornelia's novitiate probation, Connelly succeeded, through influence at Rome, in having a personal friend, whose traveling expense she paid from Italy to England, appointed as Chaplain to the Sisters. This Chaplain must

depend of course for his faculties upon Bishop Wiseman. A stranger however to customs in England, and not well versed in the language he appears to have made himself prominent mainly by some errors of judgment and a wonderful gift of getting around the law and established custom on points of legal technique.

A letter written by Mother Cornelia to the Earl of Shrewsbury, probably in 1848, states that it is "my wish that he [Pierce Connelly] should give up any interference with our Convent or our Rule. His visit to Rome has been only time and money thrown away, so far as we are concerned. And indeed, as soon as I knew what he was doing in Rome, I was obliged to write to the Cardinal Prefect at Propaganda to prevent anything being done. Had anything been done, I should not have accepted it, since it would not have been with my knowledge or consent I shall write again to Propaganda, but it will be, as I did before, to disapprove of any interference by Mr. Connelly in the Rule, or any additions or changes of the same, which I brought with me from Rome approved of by the Cardinal Will you then, my dear Lord, explain all this to him [Connelly] in your own gentle, holy way and induce him to turn his heart to his flock for the love of God—I have much more that I wish to say to you, but I cannot now do anything more than undeceive Mr. Connelly in his hopes of *ever having anything more to do with our Convent or our Rule.*"

There is a letter of Pierce Connelly written to Bishop Ullathorne evidently in 1848 about the time of the removal of the Sisters to St. Leonard's. This letter reveals the animus of Connelly against the future Cardinal Wiseman (for no reason apparently, but that he has been thwarted in his scheme to have the Sisters made exempt from episcopal jurisdiction and visitation). He tells the Bishop, Ullathorne, that he has heard that the Community is about to leave his jurisdiction, "to come again under that of Dr.

Wiseman." "My object in writing," he says, "is to beg your Lordship to prevent this." He declares in this letter that he is "determined," if he may not have his way, "to appeal to the laws of the country." In a postscript at the end of this letter he adds the conditions on which he is "still willing to take no further steps." They are: *First*, a solemn engagement (private) to have hereafter no communication by word or writing, direct or indirect, with Bishop Wiseman or Dr. Asperti.¹³ *Second*, free intercourse with the sacred observance of the laws of trust and secrecy, by letter and by personal visits in the presence of my children, or some other person, as at Rome, after I was admitted to the holy priesthood, with the express authority of his Holiness, Gregory XVI."

The answer of Bishop Ullathorne to this letter states that the "Community over which the Reverend Mother Cornelia presides," the "Society of the H. C. J." is no longer under his jurisdiction. He says that he will make known to Dr. Wiseman his [Connelly's] *feelings*. He concludes: "Let me beg you to consider the whole circumstances of your position before acting in these matters, and to consider them in the sight of Almighty God."

The "*conditions*" of Pierce Connelly were of course refused on principle, the principle of constituted ecclesiastical authority in England, the only authority that could safeguard Mother Connelly's new foundation, her life-work, and the work of those who had trusted their life's vocation in her hands, who had chosen to follow the Counsels under her Rule.

It is quite evident, I believe, from this letter of Pierce Connelly and his ultimatum addressed to Bishop Ullathorne

¹³ Dr. Asperti was the trusted friend, the Italian Chaplain whom he had brought from Italy; but who had opposed Connelly some months before, offended him and evidently incurred his everlasting displeasure.

that the restraint of celibacy was not even a remote factor in his decision to enter the civil courts of England for a contest to "recover" his wife. He had experienced opposition. His imperious will to have his own way had been crossed. He had the peculiar psychological temperament to "justify himself," to prove *his* way right at any cost. The cost was not in sight. The view of suffering, which the scandal and its consequences would bring upon Cornelia Connelly was obscured by the sole thought of self, injured self, wounded self and the fixed determination to *vindicate* self.

It was during the month of December, 1848, just when Mother Foundress and her little Community were leaving their first Convent home in Derby for the new Foundation at St. Leonard's-on-Sea, that Pierce Connelly instituted proceedings in the Court of Arches, London, to "recover his wife," as it then appeared to the eyes of the non-Catholic world ever ready for scandal: to defeat her, as it appears to us now, to force her to yield to his demands, when faced by the prospect of ruin for the work to which she had consecrated her life, ruin for the little society of chosen souls whom she was forming for the Apostolic work of Christian education. But if Pierce Connelly could be stubborn and unyielding, if he had qualities of perseverance worthy of a nobler cause; Cornelia Connelly also could be resolute and strong. Her strength was more than her own.

The plea of Pierce Connelly in the civil courts of England was that he could be held liable for any debts which might be contracted by his former wife.¹⁴ The answer to this plea contains twenty-one points in review of the case. It was presented in court by Mother Cornelia's legal represen-

¹⁴ These points have been gathered from reports of the case published in the *London Tablet*, March 30, 1850; the *Annual Register* for 1850; *Catholic Herald*, Jul. 24, 1851; the *London Times* for these dates in the Ridgeway Library is defective.

tative. The chief points are the repeated facts of mutual agreement to separate and to live apart, this approved by the Pope of Rome, drawn up in written form and signed by both parties. It is stated carefully that this does not annul the marriage, but only gives to both the legal right to live apart. The decision of the Court of Arches in March, 1850, is not very clear in principle, as reported in the paper accounts. The court seems to hold *first*, that the laws of three nations are involved, the United States where the marriage was contracted; Rome where separation was decreed, and England where the case is tried. *Second*, the *Jus Gentium* cannot come in here because the laws of nations vary on marriage. *Third*, it is stated that the decrees at Rome was not a sentence of separation. "It only entitled the parties to live separate and apart from each other"— "Would," the court asks, "this separation be a bar to an action against the plaintiff for debts contracted by Mrs. Connelly? The court decides that it would not." This decision of the Court of Arches unfavorable to Mother Cornelia was appealed and the case carried to Privy Council for a new decision. The judgment of Privy Council reversing the decision of the Court of Arches was finally given June 27, 1851. Unfortunately the only copy of the London *Times* which the writer could consult for the report of this judgment of Privy Council is again mutilated. The Annual Register, which has a full account of the decision against Mother Cornelia, has not a word (it seems like a conspiracy of silence) on the higher judgment of Privy Council. The fact however of Pierce Connelly's defeat was noted by American Catholic papers of the time. From one of these, *The Catholic Herald* of July 24, 1851, (the account evidently is taken from an English print) the writer has taken the following points worthy of note as principles underlying the final decision: *First*—The proposition is to be admitted that every tolerated religion is entitled to all the consequences

following therefrom, (i. e., a legitimate standing for the Catholic practice and discipline of marriage, separation by mutual consent, vows of chastity). *Second*—The marriage law in Pennsylvania, where the contract was originally made is the point to be considered. (i. e., whether or not Pennsylvania rightly grants divorce or legal separation is not the affair of an English court of law). *Third*—The domicile at Rome where the document of agreement to separate was written and signed is a point of law to be considered.

The judgment of the highest court in England throws the responsibility for a solution of the problem, the lawfulness of the separation back on Pennsylvania and on Rome. This must have been a crushing defeat for Pierce Connelly. He wrote to his brother in Natchez that the cost of the courts had ruined him financially (it was surely the moral and spiritual undoing of the man.). He left England, went to Italy, Florence, where he died December 8, 1883.¹⁵ He had taken the three children, who were in England, from their

¹⁵ There is evidence in Pierce Connelly's letters always of lively enthusiasm, strong feeling and impetuous temper. He was evidently whole-hearted even when carried away by impulse. His repeated protestations of loyalty and affection, and his own sincerity and honesty of purpose seem to convey the impression of something wanting in the grasp of their solid meaning. Never well balanced, his mind was probably during the last thirty-six years of his life, on the point of religion, and his own and his wife's vocation, *unbalanced*. There is one publication, which, if taken alone, and apart from other acts of his life, would appear to prove the man inconsistent and hardly sane. This publication was reprinted, evidently for religious effect and purposes of controversy in Philadelphia in 1852. The full title runs: *Reasons for abjuring allegiance to the See of Rome—A Letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury* by Pierce Connelly, M. A., formerly Rector of Trinity, Natchez—Late Chaplain to the Earl of Shrewsbury—First American Edition—Philadelphia, published by Herman Hooker, S. W. Corner of Eighth and Chestnut Sts., 1852." The letter speaks for itself; but its *reasons* are like those of a man who has lost not only the gift of faith, but the right use of his mind.

schools in 1848, and sent them probably to Italy.¹⁶ Adeline and Frank both lived with their father, and under their father's influence in Florence up to the time of his death in 1883. Both were trained from childhood to look upon their father as the injured, innocent exile, the victim of a cruel wife, and a mother without feeling, with no heart for her home, no affection, no love for her children.¹⁷ This was the cross which Mother Cornelia Connelly was destined to bear for the remaining thirty years of her religious life and work in England. It was the mental suffering, the thought daily renewed in the midst of her spiritual children

¹⁶ Mercer later came to America, and was, apparently employed in his uncle's office in New Orleans. There is a letter from Archbishop Blanc addressed to Mother Connelly, dated March 6, 1858, in which the Archbishop tells her that he had met her son at the uncle's office, that Mercer had come to see him later at his invitation; that he had acknowledged, when questioned, that he was attending a non-Catholic church, but admitted also that this "change on his part was not the result of a new conviction, but simply the result of regrettable circumstances in which his father had placed himself." What the final outcome of Mercer's interviews with Archbishop Blanc was is not recorded. Mercer died of yellow fever during the summer of 1858.

¹⁷ Through Mother Teresa (Hanson), one of Mother Cornelia's first associates, the children were kept in touch with their mother. Adeline on one occasion, with her father's consent, visited St. Leonard's. The interview with her mother on this occasion was short, secret, and, of course, painful. Though somewhat softened toward her mother, her sympathies remained still with her father. In 1884, after the father's death, through Mother Teresa's influence she came to England, Mayfield, and finally came back to the Faith of her childhood. She was now loyally devoted to the Sisters, greatly impressed by the knowledge of her mother's long, patient suffering. Later she returned to Florence, and lived with her brother, Frank (both unmarried). She died praying and holding her mother's crucifix, Jan. 29, 1900. She was buried in St. Niniato's, Florence. Frank was trained as a sculptor. He also visited England on one or two occasions during his mother's life. He saw his mother, though apparently only to renew her sorrow. He was not a Catholic in profession and practice when Adeline died, though he begged to be allowed to retain the treasured crucifix of their mother. Probably he is still living in Florence, now in his eightieth year.

and associates in the work of life, that her own children were turned against her; and that, by their father, the man whom she, as a young girl, had learned to trust and love, the man who had been instrumental in opening the way to her vocation, himself aspiring to the Apostolic priesthood, now a pervert, an apostate, a victim of pride and unyielding self-will.

The scandal of Pierce Connelly's proceedings in the civil courts of England must have been a severe blow and a trying test to the new Society of the Holy Child Jesus just established and just beginning its work in the very days of "*Papal aggression*" hysteria in England. The cause of the Mother Foundress was in the mind of the public inseparable from the cause of her Institute. Mother Cornelia had sympathy assuredly from Catholics who could understand; but something more than sympathy is needed to support and sustain, to realize and carry on the aims, the ideals and the work of a Society organized for Catholic social influence, and Christian education.

Notwithstanding the trials of the new Sisterhood, however, trials which were identical with the known sorrows and crosses of its Mother Foundress, the little Society grew. Its work was blessed with results and fruits of success in England.

The first foundation of the Sisters of the Holy Child in America was made in 1862. The patron of this new undertaking was, like the venerable Mother Foundress, an American lady then resident in England. Lady Louisa Caton, the Duchess of Leeds was one of four sisters, daughters of Richard Caton and Mary Carroll Caton of Baltimore, grand-daughters of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, all of whom married abroad. A part of the patrimony of the Duchess of Leeds consisted of tracts of forest lands in Lycoming County, Pennsylvania, and farm land (160 acres) with house and buildings near the Borough of

Towanda in Bradford County. These were offered to Mother Cornelia, and the gift was actually conveyed in 1861. The forest lands (2000 acres) were to be future source of revenue: the farm and buildings were to serve as a home for the first missionary band, and a school for the beginning of the Sisters' work in the United States.

Lady Caton evidently was a stranger to conditions in America. She had probably never seen the wilds of mountain forest land in Pennsylvania, in 1861 hardly yet opened to the lumber interests, which have since destroyed them. She knew nothing, apparently, of life and surroundings in Towanda and Bradford County in 1861. She had glowing accounts and descriptions of land and buildings in Towanda sent by land agents: but these proved later to be absolutely untrue.

Arrangements were finally made with Bishop James F. Wood (later the first Archbishop) of Philadelphia, in whose diocese the new foundation was located,¹⁸ and the first little colony for the foreign mission was chosen to sail from Liverpool, August 2, 1862, under the protection of Bishop Wood, who was then returning from a visit to Rome. The Sisters chosen for this first work in the new World were: Mother¹⁹ Mary Xavier (Noble), Mother Lucy Ignatia (Newsham), Mother Agatha (Deacy), Sister Aloysia (Walker), Sister Josephine (Kearns) and one postulant, who received the habit in Towanda, Sept. 29, feast of St. Michael, 1862. The little band of missonaries under the Bishop's care reached New York August 12, 1862. The day was intensely warm, New York heat, never experienced in England or Ireland, and the poor Sisters were clothed for winter. After the annoyances of Custom House officials, and a better welcome from the Sisters of Charity on

¹⁸ Now, since 1868, in the diocese of Scranton.

¹⁹ The custom in the Sisterhood has been to give all Sisters who have made final vows the title Mother.

Barclay St., they reached Philadelphia that same night, Aug. 12. It was decided that two of the Sisters, Mother M. Xavier and Mother Lucy Ignatia should go to Towanda, view the new foundation, though the Sisters were told by the Bishop that their services would be accepted in Philadelphia, if they consented to remain. Rightly the Sisters decided that the gift of the Towanda foundation must first be tried and thoroughly tested.

On the eighteenth of August the two Sisters accompanied by Father Charles I. H. Carter set out for Towanda. The route in 1862, was evidently by railroad to Williamsport, then by stage coach over the mountain and highlands which separate the two branches of the Susquehanna. The journey took part of two days including the discomfort of one night in a hotel at Troy, Pa. The buildings and surroundings in Towanda proved, as had been anticipated, partly at least, a disappointment. However the work assigned must be proved. Actual experience and trial must show whether or not it could succeed.

The notes left by the Sisters of these pioneer days are of interest. Firstly, they found the house (evidently a plain plank building, common in those days) their future Convent home and the home of the prospective Academy, unfinished and incomplete. The foundations were insecure, and workmen had to be employed at once to save the building from collapse. Some of the rooms had never been plastered. The Sisters had brought furnishings for the chapel from England; but it was found that the little altar had been damaged in shipping and must be repainted and gilded. The furniture of the Sisters' sleeping rooms was just a bedstead and a strip of carpet, which they had brought from England, not a chair nor a washstand. One pitcher and washbowl had for some time to serve for the use of the six Sisters. There was one chair for the Community Room, six chairs and a round table for the parlor, for the rest

improvised benches, planks set on tressels. The parish school was organized and opened in a hall in the village on the first day of September, 1862. The Bishop came to visit Towanda on the evening of the 27th of September. He blessed the house and the convent chapel, granting them the privileges of their custom in England. After Confirmation in the parish church on the twenty-eighth, he gave the habit of religion to the little English postulant on the twenty-ninth, probably the only ceremony of the kind ever seen in Towanda. The Bishop left the Sisters with words of encouragement and his blessing, but hardly with promise of success. The Academy was finally opened October 12, 1862: but not a pupil appeared of the forty that had been promised by land agents writing to England as ready to attend. The Sisters however, not daunted by this little disappointment, went among the people, from house to house, and solicited patronage for their work. Before the end of October they had twenty day-scholars and three boarders. At Christmas time the number had grown to forty, mostly protestants.

But school fees in those days were very low, and the cost of living was high. The times were "war times." The winter of 1862-63 was one of incredible suffering for the Sisters. Towanda has always been a characteristically protestant center. It has not the sympathetic heart of a Catholic community, which will provide for the Sisters and Christ's poor spontaneously. Doubtless the people knew nothing of the Sisters' suffering and want. A Catholic community hardly needs to be told of it. The beautifully worked articles which were offered for sale at bazaars probably left the impression that the Sisters were rich. But during that first winter in Towanda the Sisters were forced even to sell the shoes which they had brought from England to buy provisions for their table. The house was cold, and the Sisters who slept in the attic woke in the morning often to find

that the snow had drifted in and covered the floor and parts of their beds. Their clothing, cloaks and pieces of carpet were used as bed covers to keep them warm. It was only the kind thoughtfulness of Father Carter who sent them occasionally a few dollars from Philadelphia that carried them through that first winter of trial in America.

During the summer of 1863 Mother Connelly, at the request of Father Carter, sent out a second missionary colony of seven Sisters to take charge of the parish school of the Assumption. This presence of a second community, with the assurance of help if needed, probably gave the Sisters in Towanda courage to brave a second winter for a final test of the foundation. The winter of 1863-64 was quite as serious in trials of poverty as the previous year. Father Toner, however, who had succeeded the Franciscan from Alleghany, N. Y., as rector in Towanda, came to the Sisters' rescue, and sent provisions from the rectory when they were needed. It was decided, after two years of trial, following the counsel of Father Carter and the Bishop that the Towanda venture could not under conditions then existing, succeed. The school was closed at the end of its second year in June, 1864; and after disposing of a few little farm furnishings, the Sisters left the Towanda foundation to join their Sister associates in the Convent of St. Mary of the Assumption in Philadelphia.

Following is a list of the foundations of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus made in the United States since the unsuccessful attempt to establish the work of the Sisterhood in Towanda. It will show at a glance where the spirit of the venerable Foundress is at work in her native land, where her influence, her ideals, her Rule are a factor in Christian education.—

The Assumption—Philadelphia, Pa.

Founded 1863. Parish school—pupils, 700.

Sisters in Community—16.

- The Holy Child Convent, and Novitiate—Sharon Hill, Pa.
Founded 1864. Boarding school—pupils 76.
Holy Spirit parish school—pupils, 132.
Sisters in Community—48.
- St. Leonard's Convent and Academy—Philadelphia, Pa.
Founded 1868.
Academy Day School—pupils, 170.
St. James' parish school—pupils, 500.
Sisters in Community—32.
- The Holy Child Convent—Cheyenne, Wyoming.
Founded 1884.
Boarding school—pupils, 70.
Day school—pupils, 200.
Sisters in Community—22.
- St. Edward's, Philadelphia, Pa.
Founded 1889.
Parish school—pupils,—1200.
Sisters in Community—26.
- St. Walburga's—New York, N. Y.
Founded 1904.
Boarding school—pupils, 40.
Academy Day School—pupils, 77.
The Sisters teach Grammar Department of the Parish
School of our Lady of Lourdes—pupils, 499.
Sisters in Community—28.
- The Holy Child Convent—Chicago, Ill.
Founded 1908.
High School—pupils, 112.
The Sisters teach in two parish schools:
St. Veronica's—pupils, 290.
St. Ignatius'—pupils, 400.
Sisters in Community—26.
- St. Mary's of the Annunciation—Melrose, near Boston,
Mass.
High School—pupils, 502.

Sisters in Community—12.

The Holy Child Convent and Academy—Suffern, N. Y.

Founded 1912.

Boarding school—pupils 54.

Sisters in Community—19.

The Holy Child Convent, Portland, Oregon.

Founded 1914.

Boarding school—

The Sisters teach in two parish schools—pupils, 165.

Sisters in Community—15.

Mother Connelly visited her Sisters in America and her native city, Philadelphia, in 1867. Her stay here was evidently short, as she sailed for New York from England, October 12; she left New York on her return voyage November 27 of the same year. It is said that one reason for her apparently hurried return was that she feared possible designs of Pierce Connelly, if her presence in America were made known to him. During this short visit to her native city Mother Cornelia evidently found consolation in the field of promise for the future and in the faithful work for the Master which she saw in those whom she had trained as spiritual children in England, some of whom had been her Novices and associates in the Novitiate of her own religious life. She had the happiness also of seeing again in Philadelphia her older sister, now Madame Mary Frances Peacock, in the Sacred Heart Convent, whom her influence probably in earlier years had brought first to a knowledge of the true fold, whom she had instructed at Grand Coteau, whom she had seen enter as a postulant and watched as a Novice, while she herself was still surrounded by her own children in the quiet home of Gracemere or in the little cottage on the Convent grounds 1840-1843. There are no notes left to tell whether or not Mother Connelly visited others of her family or kindred in Philadelphia, though it

is very probable that members of the families Peacock, Bowen, Montgomery, Duval were then living in the city and seen by the Foundress. Indeed it is recorded in the *Memoirs* that it was through a niece of Mother Cornelia, Miss Katharine Duval, that the first American foundation was originally suggested to the Duchess of Leeds during the winter of 1860-61. It would appear therefore that in the midst of her greatest trials she had at least the support of sympathizing hearts among her kindred in America.

It is evident from the private letters of Mother Connelly, which are treasured by her spiritual children, that all through her life work and her unparalleled trials in England, she had the confidence and the sympathy of churchmen of highest rank and authority at Rome. One letter from Cardinal Franzoni, Prefect of Propaganda, dated January 12, 1847, and addressing the Foundress as "Very Reverend Mother," tells of the feeling of satisfaction in Rome at the news of the first formation of her Society—the foundation at Derby, October, 1846.

In October 1853 the Mother Foundress was requested to come to Rome personally in order to be present for a final examination of the Rule with a view to the approval of her Institution.²⁰ Great precautions were deemed necessary in order to prevent possible unpleasant experiences, if Pierce Connelly should know of the presence of the Mother Foundress in Italy. The greater part of the winter 1853-54 was spent in Rome waiting for the calls of the Congregation to explain points of the Rule. There is a letter of the fourth of April from Cardinal Franzoni to the Foundress asking for details of information on the *Horarium* and the dowers of the Sisters. Finally a letter from the same Cardinal dated April 10, informs her that she may now return to England, that the Congregation will make known its decision

²⁰ The Rule was translated into French for this examination in Rome.

later by a letter to be addressed to Bishop Grant of Southwark under whose jurisdiction was the Mother House at St. Leonard's. It was the judgment of the Congregation, after thorough deliberation, that it would not be prudent or expedient to give solemn approbation to the Rule of the Society so long as Pierce Connelly was alive; possible trouble was feared from this source. The letter to Bishop Grant stated that the "Sisters were to go on as usual (with episcopal approval) under the Ordinaries, with simple vows to be made once for all after two years noviceship, which shall cease upon the retirement or dismissal of the Sisters." Pierce Connelly outlived the Mother Foundress by more than four years, and the Rule received approval of the Holy See finally only in 1877, nine years after the death of the Mother Foundress.

The years of formation, of new foundations, of testing out the practical value of points and principles in the Rule of the little Society of the Holy Child, from the time of her victory in the civil courts of England to the day of her death, April 18, 1879, must have been at the same time years of deepest mental suffering to Mother Cornelia Connelly. To her the thought must have been daily renewed that, while she was training others for the Apostolic work of life, to extend the reign and influence of Christ in the hearts of the children of men, her own two remaining children were turned against her, taught from tender years that their father had been wronged; and that she had not for them the love, the feeling, the heart of a mother. Yet this undoubted suffering of her inner life, unknown then and quite unsuspected by those who lived with her, as Novices, at St. Leonard's and later at Mayfield, who recall now and tell of her personality and traits of character, seems to have had no depressing influence on her external life. It left no impressions of gloom or of a lost hope or disappointment on those who knew her. They remember now only that kind, human sympathy which

seemed to read the heart, and divine the thoughts and wants of her spiritual children. This is also the impression left by the portraits of Mother Connelly which remain. Peace, tranquil repose, reserve and spiritual control are written in every line and feature of her face. It is a face that looks beyond, a face in which the very soul seems to speak faith, hope, trust in the overruling Wisdom which is more than the prudence of men. It expresses that peace which this world can not give, and can never take away.

F. E. T.