

**LETTERS OF HOLY FAMILY
MISSIONARIES FROM JAFFNA
1862 - 1886**



**TRANSLATED BY
REV. SR. PUSPHAM GNANAPRAGASAM, H.F.**

**EDITED AND PUBLISHED BY
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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH LETTERS

By

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EDITED AND PUBLISHED BY

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subsidy for the printing and publication of this book.

Dedicated to the pioneer Holý Family
Missionaries to Jaffna,

*Rev. Mothers,
Marie Xavier Marchand,
Marie Stanislaus Quinn,
Marie Helene Winter,
Marie Ligouri Roger,
Marie Therese Van Meurs,
Marie Joseph Maroilles.*





2 January 1881
10 April 1881
15 July 1881
10 October 1881
28 October 1870
Journey

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INTRODUCTION

The Holy Family Sisters of Bordeaux came to Jaffna, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in response to the invitation of Monsignor Etienne Semeria, O.M.I., the then Apostolic Vicar of the Jaffna Vicariate. This invitation was extended with the view of obtaining the assistance of the Holy Family Sisters of Bordeaux to impart Christian values to young girls and foster the formation of their character. The Sisters were especially entrusted with the arduous task of educating young girls and caring for Orphans of the Vicariate.

The First Apostolic Vicar of the Jaffna Vicariate Mgr. Bettacchini, an Italian Oratorian, seriously considered the possibility of inviting religious sisters to assist the Missionaries in their evangelization work; yet this materialized only during the administration of the Second Apostolic Vicar of Jaffna, Mgr. Semeria, O.M.I.

In order to do a research study on the history of the Jaffna Church during the British period, the following materials were collected from the Holy Family Congregation, archives in Rome, from their annals of the sections that pertain to the foreign Missions of Ceylon. These were letters from one of the pioneer nuns in Ceylon, namely Mother Xavier Marchand who communicated detailed descriptions to their Directress General in France, concerning every aspect of their Missionary activities and their life situation in a completely new environment, culture, language, people, climate etc.

All these letters were written in French. When I requested Rev. Sr. Pushpam Gnanapragasam, H.F.C. (2nd native Provincial of the Jaffna Holy Family Province) for her help to translate them into English she most willingly and generously devoted much of her time and energy to fulfil this task. If not for her assistance and hard work this book would not have seen the light of day.

They were personal letters expressing the sentiments of filial affection and warmth to their Superiors who were thousands of miles away; however, historical data could be drawn from them concerning the missionary enterprises in the fields of educating young girls, caring for the Orphans, opening of new Convents, helping the Priests in their pastoral activities etc. These historical facts should be interpreted in the socio, cultural, political, and religious milieu of the period in which they were written.

In many instances certain repetitions are made and this shows the focus of their attention. Individual care and concern was given to each child before and after conversion and the reception of Sacraments like Baptism, Penance, Holy Eucharist and Confirmation. Besides instilling spiritual values and fostering character formation, preparing the children for the future had been another remarkable service rendered by them. The sisters followed a positive approach in appreciating and encouraging the children during their formation.

During their missionary endeavours, the Sisters had to encounter many limitations and deprivations which they happily accepted. The sense of sacrifice, entrenched in their commitment, helped them accept many inconveniences with dedication in keeping with their Holy Family motto - "All for the glory of God and the salvation of Souls". They followed the simple spirituality of finding satisfaction and fulfilment in little services they rendered to the people under their care.

These accounts and descriptions are printed for the edification of readers. Going through these letters one can't but be touched and impressed by the missionary spirit that inspired and motivated them to lead a dedicated life. Certainly these writings speak to the readers in vivid and edifying terms.

They contain encouraging words and events and they are a source of inspiration, especially to the Sisters of the Holy Family congregation. They are meaningful to others too, so far as they relate incidents and give information about the places and events which are closely connected to one's faith history.

In their descriptions of the customs, culture, and the life pattern of the people of Jaffna, the Sisters maintained an attitude of superiority which was common to other European Missionaries too. Certain terms such as "blacks", "savages" used in reference to the natives reveal that they assessed or considered the locals as uncultured. According to their understanding of culture only what was European and Christian were the norms of civilized society. Even Mgrs. Bettacchini, Bravi, Semeria and De Mazenod followed this way of thinking.

Reading the letters of the Sisters and considering the context in which these strong disparaging appellatives were used, one understands that even then the Sisters appreciated the good qualities found in the natives. e.g.: "Good Savages".

Another point worth mentioning is that almost all the European Missionaries had misconceived notions about the tenets and practices of Hindus and Buddhists. The Sisters were not an exception to this way of thinking.

In this regard it is very appropriate to quote the words of Fr. V. Perniola, S.J. a renowned Sri Lanka Church historian: "European Missionaries could more easily abandon their country, their families, their friends than give up their foreign mental outlook and their own customs. Everything local was judged from that standpoint".

There are many to whom I am indebted in many ways regarding the publication of this work. I owe profound thanks to Rev. Sr. Pushpam Gnanapragasam, H.F., for her onerous task of translating the French letters into English. I express our gratitude to MISSIO - Aachen, Germany, for granting us a subsidy for the printing and publication of this work. I am also obliged to our Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Savundaranayagam, Rev. Sr. Sophia Bastiampillai (Holy Family Provincial of Jaffna), Rev. Dr. S.J. Emmanuel, Rev. Dr. A.J.V. Chandrakandan, Rev. Sr. M. Carmen Shaw Fernandez (Generalate H.F. Archivist) Rev. Sr. M.

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Bishop's House, Jaffna.

Fr. G. Victor Pilendran

8 December, 1998.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This translation from our Annals, of sections that pertain to the Foreign Missions of Ceylon, was undertaken to assist Rev.Fr.G.Pilendran, who is doing a research on the Church in Ceylon during the British Period. However, no sooner had I begun this task than I felt enthused by this personal contact with the first band of our Missionaries, our Foundresses - Mothers Marie Xavier Marchand, Marie Stanislaus Quinn, Marie Helene Winter, Marie Ligouri Roger, Marie Therese Van Meurs and Marie Joseph Maroilles. It was a real adventure to go deep into the past story of our Family. They were moments of joy and pride. With genuine admiration and appreciation I dedicate this task of love to their memory and to the memory of all our dear Missionaries who followed the trail blazed by them. Their lives of generosity, sacrifice and courage are "the grains of wheat" that fell to the ground, died and have brought forth a plentiful harvest for the Kingdom.

Monsignor Etienne Semeria, Apostolic Vicar of Jaffna, Ceylon, had requested our Founder, Fr.P.B.Noailles for Holy Family Sisters to take charge of the education of young girls, to care for orphans and to help in the work of evangelisation in his mission territory. It fell to Mother Hardy Moison, then Directress General to carry out this project. So, on 06 September 1862 our six Sisters left France in the company of Mgr. Semeria, Frs.Boisseau and Boutin and three (03) Irish Oblate Brothers to take up the direction of the Schools for Boys. After a long trek which was certainly exhilarating, the Missionaries reached Jaffna on the night of 01 November. Our Sisters spent the night on board "The Pearl" and stepped ashore on 02 November. They were accorded a rousing reception by the people, with traditional music and dances.

In the following pages we accompany our Foundresses through the early years, i.e. from 1862 to 1886; we journey with them, with respect and wonder, to Jaffna, Kayts, Kurunegala, Trincomalee and Wennappuwa. We re-live their culture shocks,

their pleasant and unpleasant surprises, their joys and consolations, their fears, their deprivations - all of which they valiantly accepted as integral part of their missionary call.

These letters, most of them, from the pen of Mother Xavier Marchand, were addressed to the Good Mothers, Mother Hardy Moison or her successor and reflect deeply the sentiments of all the Missionaries. They are warm, full of affection for the Superiors and the Family. Through them, they shared their successes and failures, with simplicity and candour. We are impressed with their untiring efforts to establish a sound education system inspite of the harassments and competition from rival groups. In all these diverse experiences their one source of strength was God Alone. They kept clear before them their aim - "The glory of God and the salvation of souls". "The divine Master knows that we seek His glory and that our trust is in Him", was their unfailing source of sustenance.

These "edifying accounts" are vivid narratives of their work in the Schools, orphanages and workshops, of conversions, as well as the reception and celebrations of the sacraments. The Missionaries did not wait long to establish two Novitiates; one for the Holy Family and the other for the indigenous Sisters of St. Peter. Their trust in divine Providence was unshaken. They felt tangibly God's loving protection in their lives and in their works. The zeal and generosity of Bishops Semeria, Bonjean and Melizan, the kind support of the Priests, inspired and encouraged them to give themselves totally to their mission.

These adventurous beginnings appear to me as a fulfilment of the prophetic words of our dear Founder, addressed to us in the Preface to the Rules of 1851:

"The Associates of the Holy Family, dispersed throughout the world and appearing in one form or another on all the ways trod by us poor travellers, may be compared with the flower of

the desert, with the flower that grows at the edge of an abyss or at the foot of ruins and tombs". He calls us today, even as we enter the 3rd millenium, to live out this call to be "flowers of the desert" and to be companions to "those who live under the common law", in order to share with them the struggles and dangers of their life's journey. There is prophetic fire in his exhortations:

"My Daughters, there is nothing now that can check your course. Go forward, increase in numbers and virtues, and may your hands scatter on all sides the divine seed of good works and good example "May Jesus, Mary and Joseph be always with you!"

Sr. Pushpam Gnanapragasam, H.F.

FOREWORD

It is with great appreciation that I present my foreword to the genuine effort of Rev. Fr. G. Pilendran.

Rev. Fr. Pilendran is engaged in a research work on the Church in Ceylon during British period, and, the Collection of the Memories of Our Pioneers of the Congregation of the Holy Family forms part of his research. He sought the assistance of Sr. Pushpam Gnanapragasam to translate the Annals which consist of the life and mission of our early Mothers who set their foot on the soil of North of Ceylon. The coming of the band of six Nuns in the year 1862 on the Feast of All Saints is a remarkable event, for they were considered the first Women Religious with their dedicated mission in the field of Education.

Our Venerable Founder - PIERRE BIENVENU NOAILLES predicted the mission in Ceylon and in his prophetic vision, he was able to point out the first Missionary and named her with the name of the great Missionary of India - St. Francis Xavier.

This work of Fr. Pilendran is an immense help to us, Sisters of the Holy Family and also to Our Association. The first Missionaries have left their documents in French. They were so faithful in reporting all their lived experiences to their Major Superiors. The geographical set up of the places, the traditional and cultural elements of the Tamils, the habits and customs of the people and the way of celebrating our festivals were new to them. They have recorded all the minute details so meticulously that not only it is very enriching to know the beginnings of the Congregation of the Holy Family, but also serves as a valuable contribution to our historical aspect. Keeping up the tradition and preserving its continuity is an important factor in the history of the Congregations. The attempt of Fr. Pilendran is a kind and at the same time a great service to Our Holy Family Association. The regular correspondence of Mother Xavier Marchand to her Directress and to

her successors shows the family touch, the family spirit, the sense of belonging and the importance of respect to Authority. This Family Bond is the driving force of the Association of the Holy Family.

My sincere gratitude to Rev. Fr. Pilendran for his bold attempt in printing this book and to Sr. Pushpam Gnanapragasam for translating the letters into English. I wish to acknowledge that the objective of this work is to preserve the historical records of the Congregation of the Holy Family and the translation of the work is to make the Annals available to all the Members of our large Family of PIERRE BIENVENU NOAILLES.

Sr. Mary Sophia
Provincial Superior

8 December, 1862

Now people seem to be pleased with us. The Queen's advocate, who is a Protestant, wrote (interesting) delightful things about the necessity of education for women and the good we are called upon to do. He wanted to come and see us but wished to be accompanied by one of our fathers. As all were here for the Feast of Saint Francis Xavier, the Bishop gave him an appointment that day itself. When I told him how grateful I was for the generous help he gave us and that because the ways were prepared for us - it would be easier to do good, he could not speak. His eyes were filled with tears. After a short pause, he assured me that we could always count on his devotedness and that wherever he would go he would try to be useful. He was truly a Catholic at heart.

I would like to inform you, my good Mother, about our house - its interior so that you will have an idea about how we live. When it rains the water enters the whole house. On Saturday, I woke up suddenly; felt a dampness on my head; my pillow was soaking wet. We can endure this as it will pass away with time. Our working girls do not know the use of handkerchiefs; they never wash their hands; you can judge then the cleanliness of their cooking and the dishes they prepare for us. They massage themselves with coconut oil and of course this gives them a shining appearance like oil cloth but the smell is unbearable. How unfortunate for our delicate and difficult stomachs! We hope that with time and the grace of God we will be able to overcome this disgust. I think this much about the kitchen is enough for the moment. However, there is another inconvenience which because it is more serious and dangerous, makes us run every time. You will shudder, my good Mother, at the sight of these big spiders that are

found here. They are very poisonous. One of our Sisters wanted to take a book from the Library and she put her hand on one of these villainous creatures. What would have happened to her, if her good guardian angel had not enlightened her mind?. At night one hears the noise of rats and snakes - a real battle goes on just above our heads, between the tiles and the ceiling - the latter which is a simple mat, because of the rats it has been damaged; one hears distinctly the little ones of these animals and more the sinister hissing of the snake which follows them relentlessly. Here rats, toads, spiders and snakes are very dangerous, their bite is almost always fatal. You see good Mother, the kind of country we are in and how necessary it is for us to be always ready to appear before God.

21 December 1862

You will know without doubt, my good Mother, that there is no more question of establishing ourselves in Colombo. I thank God for this, as at this moment, it is impossible for us to separate. We need to give our establishments in Jaffna a solid foundation, a sure footing and we are just six. When we arrived in Colombo, almost immediately we had more than two hundred pupils. What could we do with just one English sister? We hope to have here from this town many pupils. The work in Jaffna now needs to be organised; we have also the Orphanage with non-Catholic children who are also pagans. These children as well as many others under the care of the Mission, they follow the classes but do very little work. We have also older children - girls fifteen or sixteen years old who do little work but go round the house, killing time. I suggested to the Bishop to put up a workshop so that these girls would get accustomed to work. The Bishop and the Fathers approved my Project. In order to establish everything in a regular manner, I intend to make use of the rules of the day of the Orphans of St. Joseph. We also have day school for the native children who study English. We pray to St. Joseph for the suc-

cess of this work. At the moment we are making one Novena with our children. Some pray in English, the others in Tamil and we in French; but the one to whom we address our prayers understands all languages, especially when these petitions come from fervent hearts. (In the other letter bearing the same date we read;)

We assisted at the Prize Distribution of an institution on eleventh of this month. For the first time, the Bishop presided over this event. Prior to this occasion there was a public examination for the pupils. The Protestant gentlemen conducted the examination for our students and I must affirm that I was deeply touched by their leniency and their kindness with the pupils as they questioned them. To tell you the truth, if we had not been told of them earlier, we would have taken them for Catholics and even friends. God is good to dispose the hearts of the Protestants in our favour. I believe that Madam Flanagan is a lot responsible for the interest in education which is evident in the house; the devotedness of this Lady has won for us the affection of all in general. We are very happy with our students and I like to believe that they will give us consolation.

10 January 1863

In a few days we shall begin our classes; we would have to make a number of (sections) divisions because of the different castes; but God will help us; He is so good to us! How can we not count on his aid!. Recently one of our children ran away; she was brought back by a young (pagan) girl seventeen years old who expressed to me about her earnest desire to become a Catholic. "A Protestant Minister baptised me but his religion is not any better than mine. I wish to know the truth and go to heaven". On speaking to this dear child I saw in her a great love for virginity. She had refused many offers of marriage which is unheard of among the Hindus. The Bishop also agreed that I should adopt

this child who soon took her place among our Orphans. One day I told her that the good God loved her a lot; as a response she kissed my crucifix with joy and shed tears. This dear child is for us a flower culled from among the many thorns.

On 1st January the daughter of Madam Flanagan was admitted as a Postulant. We have another aspirant whose devotion towards us is admirable. She is a native and is called Elizabeth.

On 8th January a reception into the Holy Family took place in the Chapel of the Bishop. We were delighted to see many Oblate Fathers among those who were received. It was touching to see these generous Missionaries clothed in surplice, on their knees at the foot of the altar to receive the blessed cord, a revered sign of our dear Association. Four of these priests who were outside Jaffna had come for the ceremony. They were happy to be together again as a family to hear the singing in French. One among them told the others; "The consolations I have experienced today will give me courage for a long time!".

14 January 1863

I have just finished a big task, my good Mother, the Orphanage, the Boarding and the classes organised and from now on everything will go on well. As I have already told you in an earlier letter, we have seventy five Orphans who are subsidised by the Mission and thirty taken care of by the Holy Childhood. The Boarding House is classified into four sections since the Protestants want to maintain a good standard similar to that of a high class hostel. The Protestants in Colombo are openly on the war path with us. They have published, in prose and in verse, things about us in their newspapers. They say that their Bishop will bring down teachers from outside. It is easy to see that they are afraid of us and they are on the look out to counteract the support and

appreciation shown towards our Institution. To this, another difficulty has been added, namely, the Government has sold the steam boat that was plying from Colombo to Jaffna. In future, one has to take a boat which would take eight days to reach the destination. This is going to be a great disadvantage for us as we have Boarders who come from Colombo. I hope nevertheless that we will have a few of them; I received a letter today telling me that two Boarders will come in March. We have been given a rented house adjacent to ours and we have made an entrance to facilitate supervision. The Orphans and the workshop are in the new house; as a result of this arrangement, our little blacks are much better off than before; a large hall serves as both classroom and dormitory; some mats spread out on the floor in the evening and rolled away each morning are sufficient to work out the transformation. A big building covered with a roof of leaves of trees, served as the kitchen and the dining hall at the same time. The furniture of this section is hardly any more embarrassing than that of the dormitory. Our little girls needed neither tables nor seats. How many things were they able to do without! Thus there was no question of spoons nor of forks; their fingers carried out admirably their functions (eating) and as for glasses to drink, the hollow of their hand replaced them! Nor was there any luxury in the choice and the variety of dishes; they always eat rice with the famous curry which is a sauce made of tumeric, nuts, coconut milk, pepper, chillies and vegetables; sometimes a little meat or fish is added to it. This is the dish of all the Natives !

We are going to lose the Queen's Advocate. This good gentleman, though Protestant, did us a lot of good. He came yesterday to tell us about his departure to England where he thinks he would live for three years.

9 February 1863

Up to now I said very little about our children in the Boarding House. They are not many and the majority of them, Protes-

tants. They are on the whole good but without energy or education. They are however ready to be formed. Already we can see some improvement in them; this encourages and consoles us. We wish their number would increase. In the Tamil section they are quite numerous. There are fifty three day-students and fifty Orphans and many of these are pagans still. Many Protestant families like to entrust their children to us, but they kept them back due to some sort of human respect; some ladies brought their grand - daughters saying they would like very much to send them but they feared that we would make them Catholics. The class of the lay teacher threatens ruin. The Minister's daughter, it is said, is going to open a School to prevent children from losing their faith by coming to us; the papers report that the Protestant Bishop who is fully interested in Christian education is going to get down Teachers for Colombo and Jaffna. We are in the hands of God. This Divine Master knows that we only seek His glory and that our trust is in Him! We have celebrated the Feast of Septuagesima with much ceremony. The Bishop offered the Holy Sacrifice in our humble Chapel and after him two Priests also said the Holy Mass. We had the honour of exposition of the most Blessed Sacrament throughout the day. We had prepared a throne for our good Master. The great poverty of our sanctuary almost disappeared in the greenery and the flowers. I am unable to express the sentiments of gratitude, with which we were penetrated at the sight of Our Blessed Lord exposed in the Eucharist, out of love for us in this little house and in the midst of this area inhabited by Protestants and pagans! Since we could not leave the Blessed Sacrament exposed without at least one Priest in the house, the Bishop and the Priests remained for part of the day; they indeed edified us by their fervour and their attention at the foot of the Tabernacle. His Lordship gave us the Benediction. Oh! May our Divine Master bless these people who are around us and who do not have the happiness of knowing God.

6 March 1863

My good Mother, the two young Protestant girls who had announced themselves, have come; they are very interesting girls and we have been promised more of them. I hope the Protestants will at least decide to send their children to us. There is so much good to be done for them. Already the good God has blessed our efforts. He gave us the favour of converting a girl of fifteen years. She was sick and alone with the Warden, when some one spoke to me about her. I learnt that without knowing about the Blessed Virgin, she loved her much since she owed her life to her. Her mother had several sons and desiring to have a girl she prayed to Mary, promising that if she heard her prayers she would consecrate the child to her and offer her a magnificent votive offering as a sign of her gratitude. This woman kept her promise and while she brought her up as a Protestant she fostered in her a tender devotion to the Holy Virgin; she even went to the extent of allowing her daughter to remain a virgin out of love for the Immaculate Mother. Since I knew all these details I asked the sick child if she would welcome our visit; it seemed to me that a child of Mary could not die in the path of error. On her affirmative reply I often visited her with Srs. Therese and Catherine. This good child received us as heavenly visitors; after speaking to her about Mary and the graces she obtains for those who have recourse to her with confidence, I offered her a medal; she received this with great joy and kissed it with respect. Just as I left her I told her that for nine days we would pray to this Mother of mercy for her soul and recite this simple invocation : "Our Lady of all Graces, pray for us and obtain for us the graces we ask of you". She consented willingly and thanked us profoundly. We began the Novena, soon afterwards the sick child was happy and well disposed. From that time on she spoke every day of saving her soul and recited fervently the prayers we had taught her. On the seventh day on seeing her in a serious condition, we told her to think about her salvation, to give up all errors and to embrace the truth. "Yes" she replied, "but I am afraid of the Protestants". Then

after much reflection and hesitation, she wrote down her resolve: "Please ask a Priest to come". Fr. R. P. Bonjean came immediately. He found her so ill that he said he would return in the evening to give her the sacrament of Baptism. To help our dear child in her preparation for this important event, I sent her a companion whom she welcomed with joy and gratitude. On the evening of that beautiful day she became a child of the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church! She received the name of Anne Marie. Since then we saw her often, taught her to pray, spoke to her of Jesus and His Divine Mother. "What shall I do to show you my gratitude?", she asked me one day. I replied, "When you go to heaven, you will pray for us and our good Superiors who have sent us here". "Most willingly", she answered.

When the Protestant Minister heard that we were visiting her, he sent his Catechist to read the Bible with her. His daughter too came many times, blamed her and tried to shake her in her decision but our dear Anne Marie was quite firm and now she is left in peace. Please join us, my good Mother, in thanking God for this victory and the consolations we have through this event. Every day I send two orphans to be at her side to read her the Catechism, to instruct her and prepare her for the sacrament of confirmation, which the Monsignor will give her soon.

Although I do not know English, I have begun to learn Tamil under the protection of St. Joseph. This seems to me to be indispensable, in order to form in the religious life the native girls who present themselves as Postulants; they help us a lot with the Orphans and in the education of the Tamil children. The Europeans will never learn this language sufficiently well to be able to write or to teach it. Our little Orphans recite the Rosary daily so that I will be able to speak to them in Tamil. We have given the name "Orphans of St. Joseph" to these dear children; the workshop in the house completes our work. Our young workers are happy; they work whole-heartedly; they receive Holy Communion every Sunday. Many among them do not have their parents and it would be easy to form them as founders for Christian workers.

6 May 1863

My good Mother, we should have told you that I was sick. Now I am much better but not perfectly well; this is something that is a result from the voyage and it will be difficult to get over this. However, what worries me most is the health of my sisters; three among them are tired for some days with general debility which does not let them work. The Bishop and the Priests show their concern on this occasion. We do not know how to thank them for all their goodness towards us. Do not be anxious, my good Mother; this trial will pass away like everything else. I have great hope deep in my heart. Yesterday we began a Novena to the Blessed Virgin during this beautiful month. Mary will not be deaf to our prayers; it will be a very sad thing if one of us were to die now! But, no. I do not want to give into this thought. I love to abandon myself into the hands of the good God without worrying about the future!

There is a proposal to have a foundation in Batticaloa. This is one of the best areas in the Island because of the fresh air there; we will be given a house and a garden. There is no problem about a Teacher, which increases our hope to do good work there; a good number of Protestant families would be happy to entrust their children to us. But what do we do with the sick? More than before, we find it impossible to replace one another. So for the moment I have refused this foundation. There are two Oblate Priests in Batticaloa. If I want native postulants, I would have a big number but I am not in a hurry as it is difficult to get to know them, by just speaking to them through an Interpreter. However, we are going to try out two friends of the one who is already with us and she is good. The good God himself directs this poor child and sometimes it is surprising how virtuous and religious she is, for a person who does not receive any religious instructions to that effect.

On Quasimodo Sunday, five workers and the Teacher of the Tamil School were received into the Holy Family. The Bishop

conducted the service. Rev. Fr. Salaun also received the cord. Our children are lucky. Sister Marie Joseph does what she wants!.

Our Protestant convert died peacefully last week. She had to struggle a lot to stand against the Protestants but thanks to her strong resolution she always came out victorious. She suffered very much and she endured everything with admirable patience, as she said, in atonement for her sins. On the last Sunday of our Lady's month she passed away in the arms of Elizabeth.

(Many letters from the infirmarian relate of the sickness which afflict the dear little community and we learn with what courage, resignation and generous devotion, our poor Sisters are supporting the painful trials of the climate.)

23 May 1863

In his paternal solicitude for us, the Bishop has just bought a house in the country, on the sea side, a mile away from our place. I think he has a plan to give a part of that property to the Orphans who are now occupying a building in his compound. However, his intention is chiefly to let us have a change of air and I think we will spend the Saturday and Sunday in this agreeable place. Our house is small and this change will do us good.

Tomorrow there will be confirmation and twelve of our children have been prepared for the reception of this sacrament while two others will receive their first Holy Communion. They are all very good and filled with the best sentiment to receive the Sacraments.

8 June 1863

We are all much better but not quite strong. Humanly speaking we had a sad month of May; but for our souls it was

happy and rich in merits in which a calm confidence was evident; for the flowers we brought to our Divine Mother were picked on Calvary and our songs rose from hearts oppressed with pain!

Now we are going to draw from the heart of Jesus the strength to bear up the fresh trials which he will be pleased to give us. I am anxious about the Teacher of the Tamil students; because of her poor health she is unable to continue to teach. The Bishop and the Priests are looking for someone to replace her but it is not easy to find one. One of the English boarders, a delightful girl of sixteen is suffering from a bad chest. In the Orphanage we have fifteen non-Catholics, some of whom will be baptised during the feast of Assumption. Yesterday we had the procession of the Blessed Sacrament which was a moving ceremony with which everyone was pleased as it was new. We had made paper lanterns and a banner for the young English girls who were dressed in white and on their heads a crown of white roses and a long veil. The Orphans had their uniforms and each one carried a red, white cross; they carried the banner of St. Joseph; four little girls held the ribbons and they wore crowns of roses which were beautiful on them. For the first time in Jaffna, there was great order during the procession. The Bishop and the Priests were delighted, while it is difficult to describe the admiration of the people. The children's comportment and recollection inspired so much respect that the crowd instinctively remained at a distance and no one dared to create any disorder as at other times.

Let me give you an account of an incident; while we stopped at a repository (an altar) a vehicle with many Protestants attempted to disturb our little religious "army". Our men who were with bowed heads suddenly lifted their sparkling eyes and cried out. "You are not going to pass this way". The travellers were wise and stopped their vehicle for had they attempted to go on their journey that vehicle would have been turned upside down! After the celebration our children returned home in the same order. In that huge crowd that followed, there were many Protes-

tants who were struck by the comportment of our children and the silence they observed. The Bishop insists that I should give you these details and that I make known to you the disorder that existed in the past years during these holy ceremonies, so that you would join with us and bless God for this progress which the Fathers love to call a "Little miracle".

8 July 1863

My good Mother, we prepare for you, for 15th August, the native flowers which would be very agreeable; we will offer them to Jesus and Mary for you; these flowers are the many little 'pagans' who would be present for Baptism on the feast of the Assumption. A few days ago, I went to tell them the good news; a little one of seven whom we call Marie, came up to me and said in a decided tone "I too want to be baptised". "Why do you desire to be baptised?". "To become a child of God!". "So are you not one now?". "No, I am a little pagan, a child of the devil". "But you are called Marie and at least you are the child of the Blessed Virgin!". "Oh! I will not be one until my baptism". "Very good, you are clever and if you continue to learn your prayers and your catechism, I promise you that you will receive this grace". Mary who was my interpreter assured me that this child is excellent. A few days later Marie's mother came to visit her and the dear child said with joy, "Mama, you too must become a Catholic for without it you will go to hell and I will go to heaven". "So come and get instructed". The poor mother all excited broke down in tears, and said a little later, "My child, I will do what you want; it is impossible now; but if you wish come with me and your brothers, you will make me happy!" Marie, quite firmly answered, "I will never go among pagans who are not children of God". I am sure she is among the chosen. We will give her the name Honorine; she will then be doubly dear to us.

We wait for the Inspector, this month; I doubt whether he will be favourable to us. The Government Teacher is very sick;

she is replaced by a child who was here last year; she is young and inexperienced for such an important Mission. She is a Protestant and that is enough for her appointment. We are not lucky to have the new property as yet; the Protestants jealous of this acquisition have raised difficulties. Already a Minister had made preparations to occupy the place; but Fr. Bonjean did not give him time; he himself went to live there with his boys. After much struggle, the Priest lives there - master of the place.

8 August 1863

The good God seems to desire to test our confidence. When we began to thank Him for our good health, we fell sick; however, I got one favour for which I desired to thank the Blessed Virgin. Oh! No. I could not believe that the good God would take away one of us at this critical moment!

There is a reaction among the Protestants. The young person who replaced the Teacher who died, does not inspire confidence among all; many have withdrawn their children. A Protestant who is more zealous and more influential gave us his daughter who cried and begged to come to our Convent. She then told us that her two cousins would join her without delay. The father of these two girls is very much against the Catholics. We also have a Minister's daughter with us. Last week two lovely boarders came to us from Colombo. Our Orphans too have increased in number. Although we occupy three houses, the place is not going to be enough for us. The plan for our future Convent is completed and approved but the work will begin only after the rains. The building will be magnificent for the country, but when will it be finished? They are so slow here about such things! For a day's work which will take just one person in Europe, here four people will hardly get it done.

A lot of sickness is afflicting Jaffna at the moment. I am hopeful that the good God will protect us and even heal com-

pletely my Sisters who are suffering; we are doing His work here; He will give us the strength to bear the weight of our adversities. The crosses which weigh heavily on us do not diminish our confidence. The Divine Master has so often protected us until now that we can only abandon ourselves blindly into the hands of such a loving Father!

It is some days now, that in order to keep to the request of the parents of one of our boarders, we refused permission to her aunt who wanted to take her out; her husband was furious and published an article in the papers in which he invited the Police to inspect our house saying that we were keeping the young persons prisoners etc., etc., His account dictated by his anger did not do any harm. On the contrary more new students came. Yesterday two native young girls from around Colombo came saying they want to become religious. They did not inform their parents nor the Missionary Priest for fear they would not have the consent of the Priest attached to the Vicariate of Colombo who knew us very little. I told these poor girls that they did wrong to leave their home like that and that I could not accept them under these conditions. They were very disappointed and said that they would prefer to die than return to their place, as that would be a disgrace in the eyes of the people of their caste - poor girls! I was really sorry for them and suffered much as I could not do anything to help them; but I think it was prudent to send them back - this was also the feeling of the Monsignor.

When the circumstances (situation) would permit, it would not be difficult to have a Novitiate for the native girls; but in this as in everything else we need to act only with much prudence. The Missionaries in Colombo desire that we have a foundation in Colombo; with this aim they have put a widow, a young person to begin a class; the former is one of the women who welcomed us in Colombo; She is here at the moment; she wants me to have her, if her work in Colombo is not a success. She comes to pray every day in our little chapel and says that she is filled with consolation in this humble and pious sanctuary.

24 August 1863

I wish to give you news of Sr.M.Helene of whom I have already told you - that she was suffering much. Rev. Fr.Boisseau gave me some oil from the Holy Face of Tours and we were told to make a Novena with the said oils. During the course of the novena our dear Sister felt a great change for the better; it was astonishing; she was less pale, her appetite returned and she really got better. As for me I am back to what I was when I left France. So do not be anxious about our health, my good Mother. My letter will reach you in the midst of your great work - the retreat. We shall pray for you to God that He relieves you of your fatigues through consolations and success. I too long for our retreat but that will not be now since our holidays begin only around 15th December.

On Assumption Day, six of our pagan children received the grace of holy Baptism. Our dear little Marie Honorine by her good conduct and her religious knowlege merited to be one of this number. She and her companions were filled with happiness. The ceremony lasted for one and a half hours and all the time our little girls behaved like angels. That evening, they came to communicate to me their deep joy and promised me to be faithful to their promises. I gave each one a rosary; I spoke about the grace they have been given and kissed them on their foreheads; this is a privilege which they would never forget. Their devoted Teacher was so moved that she burst into sobs. The dear children! they were so pure! Desiring that they should have of that day some impressions and souvenirs, I took them to the Chapel to place them under the protection of the Queen of Heaven. I was happy to offer on this beautiful day as a bouquet of the feast these children, who long for the moment when they will call her their Mother! I offered them in your name, my good Mother and made them pray a lot for you. On the same day, the older English students at my request composed each one a prayer of consecration to the Blessed Virgin. I had told them that the best prayers

would be picked out to be said in the name of all. A young Protestant of sixteen years won the place; she expressed her sentiments with a heart full of innocence and love for Mary. After the vespers the children arranged themselves around the altar with a lighted candle in hand and the little Protestant recited with a lot of feeling the act of consecration she had composed and through this prayer she asked the Blessed Virgin for herself and her family the signal favour that she and her family members would soon become members of the true Church of Jesus Christ. May she obtain this grace one day!

I thanked the good God who had saved us from a real danger; last week I was going towards the workroom when all of a sudden I heard the piercing cries of Eleonore, one of our workers; this child wanted to lift the mat and on doing so found underneath two big snakes and five toads! You can imagine the fright. In a few seconds I would have sat on those horrible creatures. How God cares for us! Everyday, we gratefully acknowledge the special Providence of God over the Missionaries.

The good God is sending us new trials; this good Master desires that our work should get strengthened in the shadow of the Cross. I have confidence that at the foot of this saving tree, it will grow strong and will soon spread all around the good odour of Jesus Christ. This sweet hope is my consolation.

We had the visit of the Inspector. He was very satisfied with our work in general, especially with Sister Helen's class. Her pupils gave perfect answers with much ease which was unusual. Hence we knew, it was God's work. The newspapers will probably publish this success, which will do good. This week the Protestant Bishop will come to give Confirmation. We were afraid that he would remove some of the Protestant pupils from here, but nothing happened. He got down two Teachers from England who would teach Home Economics and French. Every effort is made to stop the children from the town from coming to us; but after some time the new Teachers did like everyone else; they

either got married or left when they got tired. For our part no matter who comes - our hope is in God for whom we labour!

We wish very much to have some Tamil postulants so that they can be trained to take up the direction of the class. Since there was not enough space for that, the Monsignor has a plan to rent out a fourth house that adjoins ours; we can then admit some but our big difficulty would be to talk to them. Our Catherine will be our Interpreter until one of us is able to understand and to speak the language. Later, Sr. St. Liguori would be able, I think, to take up the direction of these children; she prepares herself by giving herself totally to the study of Tamil.

6 December 1863

My good Mother, we are nearing the Prize Distribution day which is fixed for 17th instant. The examinations which will be public, are to be held on 15th instant. God grant that these would be as satisfactory as those presided over by the Inspector. This good gentleman had said many good things about our Institution especially in Colombo; he has a magnificent book to be given as prize to the best pupil. His generous witness has touched us deeply.

The feast of St. Francis Xavier was solemnly celebrated which spoke much of the heart for everything was from the heart. Sr. Stanislaus trained the choir to sing in English and French during Mass. Sr. Therese got the pupils to present some very beautiful embroidery and Sister M. Joseph made many beautiful articles for sale which we would have for the benefit of the Orphans of the Mission. These dear children themselves had stitched beautiful Indian blouses embroidered in yellow and red, also for the sale. The day was full of joy and consolation for me!

20 December 1863

I gave your messages to our dear Orphans. I wish so much that you see them all seated around me (in the native way) fixing their sparkling eyes on your picture which I hold in my hand. Each one gave me a message; Honorine assured that she loved the good Mother very much and prayed for her always; the older ones added that on Christmas day they will offer their communion for your intention. Our little Marguerite reflected for a long time and then cried out: "Tell the good Mother that she is so good to think of us from that distance. We want to see her very much but for that we have to be very good and we will see her in heaven!". You see, my good Mother, how much these children are sensitive and full of good sentiments and how unfortunate it is that we cannot speak to them except through an intermediary. Our young English girls are a little indifferent, their hearts are not cultured; they do not feel much about all that we do for them and they are very proud. May God help us!

Our Prize Distribution went off very well. We came to know that the Protestants, with the exception of the parents of our pupils, had planned not to visit our Exhibition nor help with our examinations. One of the ladies who was present wrote on our Institution; she gave in details an account of the examinations; it was not completely free of criticism as it was written in the Protestant style but nevertheless in a way that did no good; in conclusion she said; "The Institution has one defect; it is Catholic". A glorious defect! A consoling reproach. May we never deserve any other complaint! This lady is the wife of the Queens' Advocate. She has entrusted her two grand children to us.

FOREIGN MISSIONS

Correspondence from Ceylon -

1 January 1865

I would like to have some edifying accounts to give you, but as I have told you many times, in Ceylon anything good happens very slowly; it is not just the Hindus who are difficult to convince, but the Protestants are a hindrance to us and as they exert a lot of influence by their social position, the weak let themselves be persuaded by them. However, despite the efforts of the Ministers and their Agents, our good God has blessed the devotedness of our Sisters. From the time of our arrival, the classes have got nothing but praise, both from the Government Inspector and the parents. The seats of errors have published calumnies about us, the newspapers have criticised us; this has not hindered many Protestants from entrusting their children to us and the prejudices, which they have tried to force on these poor children against us, have now been dispelled. They love the Catholic religion, do not believe any longer the stupid things given out against our Holy religion, and if they are adopting some of our believers we often hear them say such things; "I believe that this and this subject by the Catholic doctrine is true". Each Sunday the wives of the Ministers or some other devout Protestant women gather the young girls together to teach them the Bible and to give them news of the town. Some days ago, one of our students was questioned at one of their meetings: she was asked who was the Mother of Jesus. She replied, "The Blessed Virgin". All the other girls retorted, "The Blessed Virgin? say Mary, for she is a woman like any other woman". Our little Nancy spoke up, "But where is her holiness, if it is not in her being the mother of God?". The mistress did not pay much attention to this reflection and went

on, "How do you call his father?" "I'll call his foster father, St. Joseph". There was general murmur. "What! St. Joseph! A common carpenter?" Without being put out Nancy replied, "Can we not become holy in any position? Do you think our Lord would have chosen for the foster father and guardian of his childhood one who was not holy? Yes I'll always call him St. Joseph". The mistress saw that our little girl was firm in her beliefs and told her to be silent; let us hope she will adopt more and more Catholics, if the good God permits....

One of our English boarders, a lovely child of thirteen years, had been suffering for more than two months. She was admirably patient, never complained, accepted everything without even an appearance of disgust. I asked her one day if she was not bored being alone for a long time. "I say my rosary" she replied. "I then think of the sufferings of Jesus and I offer him mine". On another occasion, two of her companions came to spend their recreation time near her and she told them. "Do not deprive yourselves of your games for me"; and then showing them the Chapel which she saw from her bed she added, "He is there, that is enough". Our little Anne was truly an example to all. She is cured and continues to be good and pious.

In Ceylon there are families which came from Europe to make their fortune and here they only found poverty, because the fathers had died leaving a widow and many children by a reverse of fortune. When we arrived we found in one Boarding many such children who are too old to follow the classes and being left in the corner of the house, they spent their time not knowing what to do. We employed one of them in one of our little classes and four others were given manual work. But it was with great difficulty we could train them into that work. Today they are about eight. For some months we have given them a separate room by the name of this great Saint and they too have special devotion to him. Sr. Marie Joseph spends part of the day with them, and there she follows and prepares the work of the Boarding. Each Wednes-

day I go to them for instruction and the greatest punishment I can give them is to deprive them of this little session. Our young workers have made progress not only in their work but also in their piety. They are not the same as before. This work shop will go on well if we have enough orders. The Mission can without doubt, give them enough work but they have to learn to do better, and the persons who teach being Protestants, it is difficult to get them trained. Last year we tried to have a sale but it was not successful. So, this year we put this sale under the protection of St. Joseph. So we got 700 francs. Though small in itself, it is big considering our situation. These gentlemen bought little articles for some francs and added a sum of 100 francs, requesting me to accept this in favour of the "work".

Some days ago as a result of one of my instructions our young girls asked me permission to adopt a child of six years - a little Catholic girl, whom the mother, a poor-widow, had placed in a Protestant Orphanage in Colombo. To support their request they told me, "Good Mother, don't refuse us this, for this is a child of St. Joseph born on his feast day". "I replied that I would very gladly support this good work but we have already too many in the house. They replied, "We will pay her Board", "My children, but how are you going to do that? You yourself are poor?". "We will work in our free moments during recreations". On their condition I accepted little Lucy who would be called "Josephine". They wrote to the mother to send this child at the earliest so that we could arrange this with the Brother, Procurator. He will furnish them with work and pay these young workers each month. These little girls will give me their Boarding fees and keep the balance for their protégée. Although the Orphanage of our little natives does not function as I would like, the good God has accepted the sacrifice and good will of our Sr. St. Ligoury and she has reaped some fruits. Recently we spoke about the sacrifices the other children in Europe were making for their sake and we got them involved in sharing in the work of the Holy Childhood. They collected little gifts sometimes given by their parents and the coins to make up the sum that was asked of each member. Our dear

little ones understood these instructions and immediately they organized themselves. Two among them were called "Prefects" and one of them having nothing to give, began to collect pieces of firewood she found in the hostel grounds and when she had enough amount she offered that to Sr. Ligoury and begged her to buy it so that she would give the money to the Holy Childhood. On the 23rd of November we lost one of our natives. She fell into a well and the fright turned her blood into water - "Hydrophobic"; but she suffered with great patience. When she got worse, her mother who is a pagan wanted to take her home to treat her. But I discovered that she wanted to use evil means and I refused to give the child. The little one too did not want to go and the mother in vain used all means, caresses and threats. Tired of all these the child cried out, "Jesus, Mary, Joseph, Take my soul". In the afternoon the father arrived with four men carrying a pallanquin to remove our little Anna. I would not let her go. I went to speak to Rev. Fr. St. Genes who came to give her Extreme Unction. After an argument for two hours this man consented to leave Anna with us but asked to see Anna. I did not want to make promises but the good God to whom I prayed that moment came to our sick child's help. She fell into a crisis which seemed to be her last moment. The father, very much moved by that sight, called her, caressed her. But Anna did not respond nor open her eyes. He then turned to the wife and said that it would be foolish to remove her as she was dying. He left, but the mother refused to follow him.

As soon as he left, Anne opened her eyes and as the Priest annointed her she replied to all the prayers. She received the sacraments with fervour. The mother who was seated in a corner looked at what went on with mixed feelings of surprise and anger. Then she said that she wanted to spend the night beside her daughter and because the sick child was occupying a room in the garden, I consented. During the night, the two wardens left the child and fell asleep but the mother and the devil with her were awake. She kissed Anna many times and told her in a low tone: "Where are the keys of the door?" I will take you home

in my arms and soon you will be well". "No" Anna replied. I do not want to go. I will stay here and I do not know where the keys are". The next morning the dear child told me what the mother had proposed to her. I scolded the mother and told her to leave the house telling her that she was unworthy to stay near the daughter. Then humiliated by the confession of Anna, she began to stammer some excuses and left. This example of firmness is really beautiful for a child of ten - a Hindu convert - for here we do not know what causes violence. When we reproach a child for a fault, she replies that she is tempted by the Devil. Our little Anna was rewarded by God; she had the happiness of making her First Communion and to die in the most holy dispositions. A few minutes before she gave up her last breath she cried out: "My Holy Guardian Angel, come and take my soul to Heaven". Her example made a very good impression on her companions; it was the older pupils who buried her; they carried out their duty with a sort of veneration. There are some very good children among them but they also have defects to correct. They are born in paganism and vice. They need a lot of culture to become what we would like them to be. The new head of the School had arrived a few days before our vacation. We thought it necessary to give some publicity to our Prize Distribution and we invited the parents; not only they, but along with them came some European gentlemen who held important positions in the town. The crowd was almost all Protestants. The hall was decorated with beautiful fresh garlands and in the midst of them were oriental lamps which gave a graceful effect. Each piano student played a pretty piece and all did very well. Part of a French song was well sung and three English songs were well applauded. Three sweet little ones sang each one a solo. The youngest was only six. They were very attractive. After the distribution of Prizes, Rev. Fr. Bonjean made a short speech in which he thanked the young musicians and the joy they gave their audience; and the many 'bravos' from the ranks showed that the public appreciated the items. Another Priest then introduced me to the important gentlemen, the judge, the Queen's Advocate, the Bank Staff; and they thanked me for the beautiful evening and according to the English fashion, I gave a hand shake

to all the Protestants. They would have known that the Religious were not as extraordinary as they are figured out to be.

On the closing day of our Retreat, our first Postulants received the habit. The ceremony was held in our Chapel which we had decorated beautifully with our meagre resources. It was strewn with flowers. Our Postulants dressed in white and crowned with orange flowers went up to the Altar. Rev. Fr. Bonjean gave a short but very moving exhortation. Our children were deeply touched and most of them shed tears of emotion.

Our school reopens next Monday. The wife of the Protestant Minister went to all the homes with the Head of their School to get back the children. They reproached the parents who entrusted their children to us and demanded them on conscience to distrust us as "ravaging wolves"; the papers too gave the same opinion and praised the Head of their School highly. Many assistants desired to join her as they said she teaches Arts and Home Economics. It is certainly a trial for us but we abandon ourselves with confidence into the hands of the good God.

Jaffna 4 April 1865

In a country such as this where the education of women has been so neglected, it is to be understood that the mothers are not able to instil good values into their children. It is not only the indigenous women who are plunged in profound ignorance, but it is the same with those of European origin; all have been brought up in laziness and inaction, and most of them spend their time smoking, not knowing anything else. These same mothers do not inspire the love of God and the desire to learn, in their children. They send them to class because it is a fashion now but they should not be made tired, which makes these children extremely indifferent. They do only what they like; if they don't like to study or to work they don't apply themselves. It is useless to

look for something to get over their repugnance; they reply "I am not asked to do that and I don't like that". To this lack of energy we can add pretence and an unbelievable pride. The remarks that are made even carefully to them seem to hurt them, and are always interpreted in the wrong light. The task is difficult but we count on the help of the Master who has confided to us this portion of his vineyard.

Our children, both English and Natives, made their retreats soon after the re-opening of their School. The latter made it for the first time. Rev. Frs. Bonjean and St. Genes preached the retreats. The day before the closing of the retreats, they had their Benediction Service, which consists in asking pardon from their companions, to whom they had caused pain during the year. They showed themselves very generous, far above their nature, and we were highly edified to see the children of high castes humble themselves before the inferior castes, for we must understand the merit of this act on the part of these children from Ceylon. To give you an idea of what I am talking about I will cite an incident. A few days before the retreat one of our domestics, a woman of the lower caste, had made a light remark about one of the children of the high caste. This one became furious and she was crying aloud, shouting and saying that she was dishonest and that it would be impossible for her to live under the same roof with this worthless (unworthy) woman who had addressed her in these terms. During that retreat, I made her understand her pride and on the closing day she did not hesitate to ask pardon from that servant.

On the evening of the same day there was a procession in honour of the Holy Family. The children renewed their Baptismal vows and among them we chose five aspirants of the Holy Family who became helpers to Sr. St. Liguori and were very devoted Supervisors. We await their perseverance to receive them definitely. The English students made their retreat more seriously especially the older ones; the reconciliation was carried out in an edifying manner and they made reparation with an abundance of tears. On the morning of the closing day, the Bishop celebrated

the Sacrifice of the Mass and Fr. Bonjean preached. In the evening four among them were received as the children of the Holy Family and the ceremony was conducted with great solemnity. An English Commander accidentally assisted at the service with his wife and her sister; they told us that they were very much touched and added that from the time they came to Ceylon they had not seen anything similar. During Benediction they shed tears.

We kept the month of St. Joseph with much pomp and we prayed to our Protector for all our works. We have some hope to get some handwork from Colombo for our workshop which we had placed under his protection.

Jaffna 4 July 1865

We have begun the work to arrange our new chapel. The one we had can accommodate only a very few people and worse it had no proper ventilation. This one is neither beautiful nor rich compared to the previous one. But it is large with two more windows. It was a stable and, therefore, we have covered the ground with mats made of palm leaves and also a ceiling made of the same. In this poor dwelling the Divine Master wishes to live for love of us. We have adorned this as best as we could in order to celebrate worthily the pious exercises for the month of Mary. Every morning of this "blessed month" we sang a hymn to the Blessed Virgin during the Eucharistic service. In the evening after the litanies and during the procession another hymn was sung and each pupil went up to offer flowers to the Queen of Heaven. This new devotion gave great incentive to the children. Many among them made sacrifices so that they would not be deprived of this favour. One of our Protestant boarders who is also an orphan and deprived of a mother's love finds great consolation of heart in this devotion to Mary. She asked me as a great privilege to offer a flower to the Blessed Mother - like her companions. She was very grateful when she was given that permission and despite

her dislike for studies she makes much effort in order not to be deprived of this honour.

We have introduced this practice only among the students of the English Class, but our dear little natives who love the Blessed Virgin desired so much to offer flowers it by their good behaviour that during the beautiful month of May, all our children were good and pious. How much we thanked our Blessed Mother for the grace she had bestowed on our dear Family, and how happy we were to offer six little pagans who have been baptized at the end of the month dedicated to her! While these young souls were still beautiful in their baptismal innocence I brought them and asked them to offer their angelic prayers to God, to pray for you, my good Mother, for our good Superiors and all our works.

The baptismal ceremony was conducted by the Bishop in the Cathedral. Then a large number of orphans (boys) were also baptised. Each one had a crown made of flowers of all colours; the natives love all that is bright; our little girls wore crowns of white roses which went with their modesty and gave them a little of the air of the miraculous virgins of our country-side. They were really attractive. After the ceremony which was quite long, they went in procession with the orphan boys to the Bishop, accompanied by Rev. Fr. Bonjean and the religious, to thank him. His Lordship welcomed them with his usual goodness and distributed little buns which are like cakes for the natives. These buns and bananas they ate happily with good appetite.

After some days, there was another interesting ceremony celebrated in our Chapel. The Bishop came to distribute first Holy Communion to eight of our children and a little later, fifteen others received the sacrament of confirmation. As you know, we have established the Association of the Holy Family among our indigenous children; it is six months after that, five among them were received as aspirants; since that period, they have showed themselves very devoted to their young companions and gave them

their full attention. They also distinguished themselves by their good conduct. They had good influence on all and I believe that admitting them definitely as children of the Holy Family would encourage them.

Jaffna. 4 September, 1865.

During the month of July as we were returning from our evening walk, we met a child of eight years, who followed us up to our house. As she reached the gate of the Convent, she cried in a pleading tone, "Madam, take me with you!" I went close to her; the poor little one was almost naked, her face was attractive although a little wild. She told me that her parents were dead of cholera three years before and from then on some one or other gave her food, that she slept under some shelters and that her village was quite far from Jaffna. "But who brought you here?" I asked her. "A woman whom I didn't know; her skin was white as the Sisters, also her robe; she entered into a Church and left me on this road saying 'Go!' Then I met you; I thought you would take me and so I followed you". She also told me that she was a pagan but that she would become a Christian. She added: "Take me, I will be good and will work well". I was careful not to refuse (a place to) this child that divine Providence seemed to have placed in my way; I changed her pagan name to that of Madeleine and after offering her to the Lord, I led her to her companions who welcomed her with much love. The poor child who was not used to good manners, did not know how to express her joy especially when we changed her dress; she laughed like a mad person that made us think she had an evil spirit. For some days she behaved like a savage causing disturbance everywhere, especially in the Chapel where she would push one, pull the nose of another etc.. I told her with a little severity that if she was not well - behaved, I would remove her dress from her and put her back on the road; the poor little one looked at me with great surprise as if questioning, what she should do to be good. I told her the things she should

not do. Madeleine fell on her knees, joined her hands crying: "Don't send me away, I'll be good". She kept her promise; she now began to read and pray, to sweep the garden like a big person, and each time I met her, she would look questioningly to be assured that I was happy with her. No one came to claim her; she now belongs to the Holy Childhood and will soon, I hope become a Christian child.

Good Mother, you know that our children of the Holy Family have adopted the good work of the Holy Childhood and they are going to join the Propagation of the Faith in order to increase our revenue we have thought of organising a lottery for the benefit of these two works; our dear children with a lot of enthusiasm, have made the tickets during their recreations and were also ready to give them out. There was among them a holy competition to offer something to Jesus and for His work; many sacrifices had been made for this but nothing was as great as our dear Florine's who gave with a generous heart her beautiful doll which she lent only to her close friends. Our Protestant children took all the tickets and distributed many; all looked forward to the draw with great impatience as it would be a time of rejoicing. We fixed the draw for Christmas Day and everyone rejoiced beforehand thinking of the prizes when suddenly a dark cloud covered our blue skies of hope. Some one came to tell me that there was an English law that forbade lotteries and that there was a strong punishment - even an imprisonment of some days - for those who organise it.

What could we do? We consulted the law on which our anxiety was based. Without getting discouraged we tried to dispel the storm by approaching the Queen's Advocate, told him of our ignorance of the law and requested him for permission to go through with the lottery; he consented to it, telling us that he would try not to notice it at all. We thanked the good God, continued with our preparation and on 8th September, our children and the past pupils who came to join them, all were joyfully assembled in the

school. The tickets were arranged on the table attractively; the children of the Holy Family dressed in white and wearing their badges, were involved in calling out the tickets, writing the names of the winners etc. Everyone carried out her responsibility with perfect attention. The Monsignor along with some Fathers assisted at our little celebration which began with a French song followed by a little play which was very interesting; then came the draw which was carried out in perfect order; everything came to end with a final piece of music and an English song. The lottery came to 112 francs which was presented to His Lordship by a lovely little child for the benefit of the two good works (Holy Childhood and Propagation of the Faith) Monsignor won the beautiful doll coveted by many young hearts who all fought for this magnificent prize, dreaming in advance about the joy they would have if they should get it. His Lordship gave the gift to our dear little Lucy who received it with inexpressible happiness. Lucy was only 7 years old, but she was very intelligent and above all had a wonderfully kind heart. The day after she received her precious treasure towards which she already had an unlimited attachment, she came to me holding the doll in her arms and with an air of great importance, "Mother" she said, after receiving a kiss from me, "will you allow me to give my beautiful doll to Florine? She made a big sacrifice by giving it over for the lottery and she would be very happy if I gave it to her; she had received this from one of her friends on the day of her feast and I know she loves it very much". "But would you have the courage to make this sacrifice yourself?" I asked. "Oh, yes! I will make it willingly", she replied with her charming smile. "Well, Lucy, I permit you gladly to do this good act; I'm very happy with you and so also is the little Jesus". She left me joyfully to carry out the sacrifice as it is true that the practice of good makes people happy, even among children!

Our indigenous children have considered with a holy envy the good work the English children had done; I took this chance of their happy dispositions, to get our little congregation to do something for the Holy Childhood. "I know, my dear children", I

told them "that you are very poor but charity is clever and extensive especially when it is inspired by gratitude; you are children of the Holy Childhood and you ought to be disposed to make sacrifices for your Mother". My little audience understood me and we decided on having a sale.

In the course of the month, these poor children have sold vegetables they had cultivated during their free time; I paid them with rosaries, medals, engravings, telling them that these objects would start off the sale and that they should see to the rest. They asked me for some days but as they had only pious images everything was soon collected; they begged Sr. St. Ligouri to take something from the provisions each day and give the cash for them - two measures of rice, a coconut, some vegetables and some ingredients which are used for the curry (Indian sauce). Sr. St. Ligouri found this difficult since she gave just what was necessary but our dear children told her, "Sister, the children in Europe impose on themselves privations for our sake; can we not also make some sacrifices for our work? Our little companions are not going to suffer when we cut down only our own portions." Since this was only going to last for some time we gave permission - to cut down only one measure of rice. They made use of their recreation to make brooms from coconut leaves; then from the coconut fibre they made ropes. The Bishop wishing to encourage them sent some objects to enrich their sale. Two days before the Bazaar we placed the statue of the Infant Jesus with a little basket in front of him. On it were written these words: "The Infant Jesus wants a little offering from you. In return, He will give you many graces and blessings". We wanted our English students to participate in the good works and help towards the sale. We succeeded although our Catholic children are not rich in their generosity. They were also willing to respond to the call of Jesus and to make sacrifices for love of Him. Among the objects I recognised a little statue of the Blessed Virgin given by the Bishop to a poor child who had a great devotion to Mary. This little statue followed her everywhere; during class hours she placed it on her

desk, hence this poor child in giving up this cherished object certainly made a great sacrifice. Another child of our labourer had nothing and she came to Sr. Marie Joseph with her earrings in her hands asking her permission to give these to Jesus. Since she had bad eyes this permission was refused to her which caused her great disappointment and she returned again with tears requesting the same.

Our Protestant pupils were invited for the sale at which the Monsignor and some Priests were present. Many Catholics too came for this from outside. The bazaar was installed in the English Class room and our dear orphans began with a song in Tamil which was accompanied by Sr. Stanislas on the harmonium. Then followed a small dialogue on the Holy Childhood. Our little indigenous children fulfilled very well their roles and everyone was satisfied with their good manners. The sale began in the manner of an auction. Everyone was well disposed to buy the objects on sale. Baskets of coconuts, rice, onions, pepper, chillies and other greens were spread out on the floor and then coal, ropes and brooms; Rev. Fr. Bonjean bought the ropes. The Brother, the rice and other provisions. We got 62 francs from the sale and although the sum was small, it was beyond our expectation. This little feast ended with the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament which our Bishop gave in our small Chapel.

Some time back, one of our children from the workshop told me about her desire to embrace the religious life. I pretended to give little attention to her request and told her that I would examine her vocation. Her sister who was also in our workshop gave us a lot of trouble because of her bad head and we decided to send her back to her mother. During this interval a marriage proposal came to our future postulant; for in this country without demanding the consent of the young girls marriages are arranged; Catherine's mother wrote to her that her brother would come to take her and her sister. Catherine replied that she had no intention of marrying. No attention was given to her letter which they

thought was an exaggeration; the brother came to take her and asked her if she had lost her head; she replied smiling; "No, I know what to do". The threats of her brother found her unwavering in her decision; in frustration he bought jewels and other objects for her other sister saying that Catherine would not receive anything for him. "What I have is enough for me; I don't want anything else", she replied. Her brother finally calmed down and asked me what he should do. I told him he would be culpable if he opposed God's will and that he should not force his sister to do something against her liking since this was a thing of importance. He was a Catholic and he understood me well; he left Catherine in peace and took Leonora with him. The departure of this poor child was heart breaking; "I know that I could not stay here since I had always given bad example; but I fear I will be lost in the world. Please pray for me so that I may not be unfaithful to my God".

Another child from our workshop is at this moment persecuted by her mother; this poor woman, finding herself in misery, accepted the protection of the government who with the intention of making them Protestants, gave the two some comforts. She wrote many times to our dear Maggy that she would come to take her so that she would enjoy these benefits; the courageous child replied that she was much pained to see her mother allow herself to be influenced by the Protestants; she added that she had all that could make her happy and that she would rather accept to beg for her bread every day than expose herself to losing her faith. The unfortunate woman showed her letters to the Ministers; one of them brought to my notice that this woman had written to the judge of Jaffna to grant her the favour of withdrawing Maggy from our house and to let her be taken to Colombo. The day I got the letter, the Judge who should have taken a decision on the subject was buried. I do not know what the good God had reserved for this poor child. She prays with a lot of fervour. I have confidence that good St. Joseph will protect her.

As I have already told you, good Mother, our Sisters had awaited the Inspector this year with a certain amount of anxiety; Before his visit, we often whispered this prayer: "Lord, I put my trust in you, do not let me be confounded". Our good Master heard our plea; the examinations went off well. The Inspector was most decent and he even behaved as our friend. He had given seven prizes and two days of holiday; he told the children that he saw with pleasure, the progress in the classes; he stayed two days and on the afternoon of the second day, he brought an English lady to give her the joy of assisting at the examination of home-science and hand work. On leaving us, this lady told us that this session had been very enjoyable to her and promised us that she would send to our workshop some good articles that she would make herself. Our best student brought much credit to the class. After reading her composition, the Inspector said that he did not think there was anyone in the Island who wrote so well as she. He praised and asked what book she would like as a prize and Charlotte - a Protestant - without any human respect replied, "Life of the Saints". The Inspector smiled and assured her he would get it for her.

I must tell you, good Mother, that this child who is very gifted had a distaste for studies; since she desired to become a Catholic and a child of the Holy Family, with tears, she came to me asking to be admitted into the latter. "My dear child", I answered "You have to receive Baptism before you can become a Child of the Holy Family. In the mean time, you will have to behave well so that you can become an Aspirant. Your teachers tell me that they are not happy about your progress in your studies; so if you apply yourself well to your studies, pass well your examinations, that would be a proof of your desire; then I can agree to your request". "Mother"- she replied, "You can count on me". She did work hard and was brilliantly successful.

The Inspector visited our building; he remarked that he had never examined anything with so much satisfaction and on the following day he sent us some money for our new Convent.

Letter from our Tamil children to the Boarders of Montpellier
(Literal Translation)

Most Honoured Young Ladies, our Sisters and Benefactors, Boarders (students) of the Holy Family - Montpellier!

We, your poor little native Sisters, students maintained by the Holy Childhood, from the Boarding of the Holy Family Sisters, Jaffna, desire to write you:

We want to let you know in the first place, how much our venerable Bishop and our good Sisters love us; but we have no words to express this love. His Lordship has given us a very big proof of his paternal love when he brought our dear Sisters from so far, for us to learn to love God perfectly and to lead us in the path of Virtue (heaven); the Sisters have borne witness to their great love when they responded with so much generosity to the invitation of His Lordship to leave everything and come to our help. We wish to describe to you the joyous arrival of His Lordship, the Bishop, and the good Sisters, in Jaffna; this account is of course rather late in coming and we regret that we could not send it earlier.

What a great day it was for Jaffna! As soon as we heard that the ship (that was) bringing our Bishop and the Sisters was approaching the land, we all gathered at the harbour to receive them. How happy we were to see the visitors whom we had long awaited with so much eagerness! It is impossible to describe our feelings; we could not take our eyes off them! The Christians came in crowds to welcome them with the marks of honour which our poor country could afford and they accompanied our visitors with great pomp to the Church. It is only just that the happy children of such a kind Father bear witness of their love and gratitude. We, the last of his children, never cease to pray for him; but we know that our poor prayers are inadequate and we ask you kindly and humbly to add your prayers in order to obtain from God the grace for our good Pastor to be with us for a long time.

We have told you also how much the good Sisters love us and we are happy to repeat this again. They would very much like to be able to instruct us and give us good advice but unfortunately they do not know Tamil; they are very disappointed. Daily we pray to the Infant Jesus and the Blessed Virgin to grant the Sisters the grace to learn Tamil quickly so that they would be able to instruct us.

Our Rev. Mother has told us how much you love us. We are thrilled and we thank you with sentiments of deep gratitude for the alms, you, in your charity, have sent here for us; without your generous aid, we know quite well that it would be impossible for the Jaffna Mission to accept and bring up so many children, fortunately snatched away from the darkness of paganism. You will be consoled to know that fifteen among us have made their first Communion and received Confirmation. It was through your alms and those of our Rev. Mother and our much loved Mother Superior that on this great day, we appeared in Church all dressed in new uniforms, our heads covered with veils and crowned with flowers. We always pray for you to the Infant Jesus and His Holy Mother. We hope that you will willingly add your good prayers for your little native Sisters from Jaffna. We have, Mother, good news to give you that ten of our little companions still catechumens are preparing themselves with a holy desire to receive Baptism on the feast of the Assumption.

We, the undersigned, your humble little Sisters who were newly confirmed, have written this letter in our name and in the name of all our companions.

(Signed. Maria, Aguesou, Agustina, Antonis, Rosa, Nollina, Appolonis, Teresia, Barbara, Marianna, Meri, Francisca Maraguirettou, Sousana).



Letter of Monseigneur Semeria to the Boarders (Children) of Montpellier - who had adopted, as a good work, to help the Tamil Orphans of Jaffna.

Jaffna, 26 June 1865.

My good and dear Children,

It gives me pleasure to add this note to the letter written by our dear Orphans of Jaffna to you and I thank you with them for your charity with which you have wished to come to their help. These poor children were all pagans formerly; thanks to the funds from the beautiful work of the Holy Childhood, of which, no doubt you are members, many among them not only were baptised, they have had the happiness of receiving the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confirmation; still others are preparing themselves to become members of the holy Church.... We love these poor little girls very much and although up to now they are hardly as instructed, as pious and as good as you who, are born of true Catholic parents and have the happiness of being under the gentle and maternal guidance of the Holy Family Sisters, we hope, however, that these children will try hard each day to progress in virtue and imitating your good example they will profit with a holy zeal from the immense help that Our Lord in His infinite goodness, has given them in entrusting them to the care of our worthy Sisters of the Holy Family. May you be blessed, my dear children, a thousand times, for the good you have done to these poor orphans. I am also grateful to you as if you have done this to me personally. What shall I say? Jesus Christ, who has said: "What you have done to the least of my brothers, you did it to me", has written your good gesture in the Book of Life and he will not let it go without a reward. I earnestly beseech the Divine Saviour, who has called little children to him with so much love and promised the kingdom of heaven to those who become like them, to fill you, my dear children, more and more, with his many blessings, pre-

serve you from all dangers and guard you in innocence and make you grow, like him, in grace and wisdom before God and men. I am convinced that for your part, you will work unceasingly to draw down on you God's graces, that you will continue to be very modest, charitable, obedient to your good parents and your worthy Teachers and pious like the Angels. Love well the Divine Infant Jesus and visit often the Holy Altars wherein He resides. Let those who have had the happiness of making their first Communion approach the Holy Table as frequently as possible, with all the fervour they are capable of. Have a filial devotion towards the Holy and Immaculate Virgin who has given us the Divine Child. Continue to pray for our Orphans of Jaffna, for our good Religious, for our dear Missionaries and finally for him who blesses you and your worthy mistresses with his whole heart.

J. Etienne Semeria

*Bishop of Olympia, Apostolic
Vicar of Jaffna.*

On the feast of our good Mother, different letters written by these dear children from Ceylon brought joy to her; we limit ourselves to cite here only these from the Tamil Orphans, giving literally a curious and interesting translation.

4 July 1865.

We greet you our Honoured and great Reverend Mother. You preside over everything, govern all, the second Mother after the Queen of Heaven and earth and the heiress to all blessings for us.

By the mercy of the Divine Son and the assistance of His holy Mother who is the beauty of Heaven, as well as by the love that you, Reverend Mother, have for us, poor children, we have been chosen among our pagan friends to be snatched from the

hands of the Devil, from a state of sin and ignorance, in order to rejoice in the blessings of God, in the maternal love you show us. Most revered Mother, earlier we were plunged in the darkness of paganism; today our eyes are opened and we distinguish between good and evil. The rays of spiritual light have begun to glow in our hearts. Today we believe everything the Church teaches as truths revealed by God himself. Our hearts are full of love, gratitude and respect towards you, Reverend Mother, for having sent your beloved daughters, the Sisters of the Holy Family who have come from such a distant country leaving their dear parents, friends and country to instruct us poor pagans.

Very Reverend Mother, you pray for us to Jesus, you obtain spiritual blessings to nourish our souls, (therefore) we bless you and praise your holy name for having sent, for our sake, the Holy Sisters, Virgins filled with love and charity to this pagan and uncivilized country. We too are very grateful as we feel altogether unworthy of the great riches which your goodness, by God's bounty, has shared with us. In the first place, we thank God for this, secondly, we thank you, Reverend Mother, with the mark of greatest gratitude. Our Reverend Mother (Superior) who has come here to show us the way to heaven, is our helper and our support; she is extremely good to us.

Countless are the acts of charity that our spiritual Mother does for us, so much so that these privileged blessings we enjoy here cannot be experienced in any other part of our pagan country. Dear and Reverend Mother, to repay all the good that we are blessed with in abundance, is not within our power, but God is all powerful. One of the greatest favours our Reverend Mother has given us is this opportunity to write this humble and filial letter to you. This good news was announced to us on last 26th of June. Your patronal feast will be celebrated on 15th of August and on this day all of us individually present to you our filial wishes. Although far away from you and not having seen even your loving qualities, we know you, because many good things have been

told about your many virtues and your devotedness. We long for the day of your feast to celebrate it with all the expressions of joy and gratitude that we are capable of and even though we are sinners, we pray to the good God for your Reverence, for a long life (for you). Since we will not have the happiness of seeing you here in this world, we hope, with the grace of God to see you one day in Heaven. Our Reverend Mother has obtained us the favour of receiving the Sacrament of Baptism, the Bread of Life in the Holy Eucharist and the Holy Spirit in Confirmation. With all the spiritual gifts we are going to receive there will be nothing more needed.

We learn to read and write our own language, a little English; Geography, Arithmetic and some Sewing. The Sister whom Reverend Mother has put in charge of us, is a real mother to us; day and night she cares for us, wants to make of us good children. Reverend and Good Mother, how happy you would be to learn that five of your orphan children have been chosen to be members of the Society of Jesus, Mary Joseph and four to become aspirants.

We ask once more your blessing, Reverend Good Mother. Please remember to pray (for us) unceasingly before the throne of God for your children of the Association of the Holy Family who through your goodness, have been received into the Holy Institute so that they become better children, fulfil their duties and ever be grateful to God and to your Reverence.

*Always your humble and submissive children,
Rose, Mary, Margaret, Maria, Francisca,
Teresa, Mary, Mary-Ann Anthonia.*

***Extracts From A Letter Recounting The
Celebration Of The Feast Of St. Francis Xavier.***

Jaffna. 4 December, 1865.

After Jesus, Mary and Joseph, St. Francis occupies here the first place in our hearts, as Apostle of India and Patron of our dear Mother; as this is a double feast the children celebrated it for two days for you know the natives are lovers of pleasure (fun). The least significant event ends in a feast from six to eight days among them. Is it surprising then that we had a celebration for the feast of our loved Mother and that of her Patron Saint? Therefore, let me share something of what happened yesterday.

The native orphans received our Mother in their class room all decorated with greenery; they had prepared a beautiful arm chair, covered with Chinese silk above which was hung a Cross surrounded by a lovely crown of roses; all of which was done with ease. After a song in Tamil, there was a speech of compliments made by one of the children of the Holy Family. This was followed by a poem in Tamil composed by our Orphans themselves.

From the Orphanage, our Mother went to the Workshop where the children acted out a short symbolic dialogue which was very interesting. Then she passed on to the English School; as she entered, she was taken by surprise with a beautiful French choir; above her seat, on bands of lace were written the words: "Long Live Our Much Loved Mother; May She Be Happy".

Then there followed speeches in French and English and each child knelt at her feet offering her good wishes and her feast day bouquet Soon after that came the turn of the Community which also fêted her. Monsignor desired to participate in the feast by sending a beautiful white chasuble, two pretty lamps and a

work on meditations in four volumes. From the simple community room, we entered the Workshop to admire the hand work of our children; the place looked festive, with hand work of all sorts, spread out on the table telling us about the approaching sale which would take place along with the prize distribution. On one side, we found there beautiful little blouses for the Orphans, linen pieces for the community, many articles for the Chapel all done with a lot of taste.

But if the house rang out with festive greetings, outside our good women heard these echoes and according to the Tamil custom many mothers of day students came with gifts of cakes and fruits. There followed a delegation of Orphans from St. Joseph's, Colombogam, who brought two baskets of flowers. The feast was over, at least for the first day; the next day there were new surprises; let me take you, dear Sister, to our little Chapel which was neatly arranged by Sr. St. Ligouri and so modestly enriched by the hard work of our children of St. Joseph - that St. Francis Xavier ought to be proud to see himself so honoured; but he waited for that; for the previous day he had to be washed and cleaned. Mother had given him over to my care; Well, after my work, I was tempted to send my bill to the Saint, as the Flemish painter who added a cushion to Pilate, a tail to the cock of St. Peter! After having been to him, a barber, shoe repairer, tailor and doctor, I felt justified in asking my fee can you guess what? for good weather, sunshine instead of a flood! But the following day when St. Francis Xavier looked so beautiful high on his pedestal, I felt a scruple that I should make a discount. His soutane, the lace of his surplice, the gold embroidered stole and his beard appeared worth the trouble. I made another count (petition) and now it was not anything temporal but for eternity, for our Mother, our Sisters, for the dear children and for myself. Perhaps, this time, he will find that I have asked too much! Whatever it may be, let us continue with our story ...

His Lordship had been kind enough to come and celebrate Holy Mass during which we sang the canticles of St. Francis Xavier. "O my good Saviour" and "God Alone" ... He came again willingly to give us Benediction in the evening during which we sang the "Tantum Ergo" and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. The great Saint whose feast we celebrated received on his altar the visits from our Lord and with this double benediction, the feast of Sunday came to a close; but on Monday, we had another more brilliant attraction at least for the amateurs.

An interesting comedy was prepared; the day was spent in trying out costumes and in practising the play. Finally, the spectators and the actors were satisfied with their little evening celebration. It will be repeated probably at the end of the month, for the feast of His Lordship.

On Tuesday, all had to think of returning to their classes. After so many days of celebration it was somewhat difficult; but Mother had planned an outing to Colombogam for the afternoon. His Lordship had also promised them a vacation for eight days in the countryside; this will help them to accept joyfully the days of class which still remain.

This month is the prize giving and probably, the books ordered from England more than three months ago, will not arrive; we run the risk of having a prize distribution without distributing the prizes. They were already sent by the Cape of Good Hope, and you know that in this sea more than one sailor loses his hope and his life. Let us not lose our confidence in God and let us be resigned to do just what we can and not what we want in this distant Island.

*Extract Annals IV***FOREIGN MISSIONS***Correspondence from Ceylon Jaffna.**5 Jan. 1869.*

My Very Good Mother,

In our last letter, we spoke to you about the measles that raged among our dear little natives and that one or other among them succumbed to the disease. Alas! death did not stop with that! It claimed eight more lives and they are the young flowers that were watered by Baptism; the good God has come to pluck them to adorn His eternal garden and through this to open the gates of salvation to other little pagans who could fill the vacant places left by these dear children. This thought alone has been able to soften the pain caused to us by the loss of our little Orphans. Thanks to the zeal of Rev. Fr. Pellissier, all of them were very well prepared for the supreme moment; this good Priest was, at each moment, near them, to encourage them, console them, to prepare them for their last journey; just one among them seemed to have some regret in life, and this was solely because she could not realise her desire to consecrate herself to the good God. "The good God then does not want me to be a Religious!....." she cried.

It is in the midst of these concerns and anxieties for our dear flock that we carried on our preparations for the feast. The happy day arrived on which the Lord gave us a Father, Monsignor Bonjean came to fill the big void created by the death of our Holy Prelate. The reception of our new Bishop was indeed a real triumph. The huge crowd that awaited him on the beach was composed of people of all faiths; the enthusiasm was shared by all.

Never before was there, a similar reception, not even for the Queen's Representative, the Protestant papers commented. His Lordship came to visit us the day after his arrival; after he had vested himself in the parlour, the Bishop, with his clergy went in procession to the Chapel. We opened the march with our pupils by singing the Magnificat. Monsignor gave us the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament; after this, pious and solemn celebration, he went to one of the class rooms where he received the compliments of the pupils who had gathered there. The English students produced a pretty little play. Monsignor had a good word for each one and we were able to feel that our late Prelate had bequeathed his paternal heart to him.

My good Mother, the month of December was for us a very busy one, but it was also a time of a number of graces. For some particular reason the prize distribution was not held publicly this year; we had as guests Monsignor and the fathers. The wife of the Government Agent sent, as a prize, for music, a remarkable work by one of the English authors. This Lady was always good to us and it was with sincere regret we saw her leave for Europe.

As in the preceding years, this year too we placed our sale under the protection of Our Lady of Hope and of St. Joseph; from a human point of view, we ought to have had poor results from our labour because of the bad dispositions of many of the Protestants who for some time had started to set themselves against us. The wife of a Protestant Minister along with some others who did not like the Nuns, had got down from England some finished objects in order to organize a sale for the benefit of the poor; they said. This sale took place fifteen days before ours; the English Ladies were given the most pressing appeals so that they would harm us.

While the Ladies were preparing for the sale, the preachers of error unleashed their anger in their sermons against parents who were imprudent to entrust their young girls to us. That

was so strong and ridiculous that a gentleman and a lady left in the middle of the sermon; this was noticed by all as the Protestant Churches were small and never well attended. During this storm, we kept calm for what can the spirit of evil do against those who trust in God? Then, can Mary our hope and St. Joseph our father, let us down? The children of St. Joseph had made many objects and had promised to pray much for the souls in Purgatory if they had a good sale. Their confidence was not in vain for indeed the sale was very good; only some Protestants came to buy but on the other hand the Catholics were more numerous than in the past years and they bought many things.

After the hard work, came the holiday. The good God deigned to give us a holy retreat in solitude; this was preached by the Bishop himself. These instructions that were so solid, did us a lot of good. After our retreat, the two novitiates had theirs; these were short but very fervent. The closing day of the retreat we had a big feast; the good God showered His grace in abundance on our work; Our three novices of St. Peter made their vow of obedience; these are foundresses of the new branch of our dear Association and they are three in number like our first Mothers of the Holy Family. Two postulants took their religious habit; one is called Sr. Marguerite - Marie, the other, Sr. Honorine. While the former was proud to bear the name of the Apostle of the Sacred Heart, the latter was glad to have the name of her good Mother. All the ceremonies were carried out with great pomp in our Chapel. The Bishop, accompanied by Rev. Fr. Pro Vicar, Rev. Fr. Pellissier, preacher of the retreat, presided over the celebration. Our natives must have a lot of exterior celebrations; they need to see and to hear; they do not understand vows made in private as this does not make much of an impression. We have admitted two of our Orphans to the Novitiate of St. Peter; Marie Achi and Maria, the former is a charming girl who has received some instruction and for one year she has given classes to the Orphans. The latter is the foundress of the Orphanage of the Holy childhood in Jaffna or rather the first pagan convert to be admitted. Her mother is a pagan; she even has a temple in her garden and she lives out

of the offerings that are brought to sacrifice to the idols. My good Mother, you can imagine then, how this woman is annoyed with the eldest child's decision for she has two other children; Maria, dreading her mother's anger had begged to be accompanied by a Sister when she came to visit her; this visit took place yesterday. I sent Sr. M. Lousie with our new novice. On seeing Maria without a necklace but with a crucifix around her neck, the mother at once demanded an explanation for here, the women even the poorest are never without pearls around the necks. Sr. M. Louise told her about her daughter's resolve to give herself to the good God and added that in exchange for worldly ornament she has taken the cross which is most precious. Our poor pagan understood nothing of this language, so sitting on her heels as if to speak about an important subject, she said that it would be a disgrace to her and to her caste if her eldest daughter did not marry etc. She ended her discourse thus: "Look, I would prefer you take one of her two sisters, but I cannot consent that my eldest daughter commits this sin" - Sr. M. Louise told her that it was not we who chose her, that it was God who gives her the vocation; to this the mother replied, "What good will God do to her and what is she going to give God by not marrying?" The Sisters and the children tried in vain to persuade her, but she understood nothing; on leaving the place, she told her daughter, "Put on your jewels and give up all these ideas; you must get married to preserve your dignity and not to disgrace me; if you don't do what I want, you will never see me again". Maria withdrew with a heavy heart but at the same time, praising God who had drawn her from the darkness of paganism, to call her to Him; she prayed to the good Master to make His divine light shine on her unfortunate pagan mother.

Three of our children from the English class had the happiness of making their First Communion and thirteen from two other classes also received the Sacrament of Confirmation in our Chapel. Since these ceremonies took place on January 1, the first day of the year, His Lordship, after his dinner, received the good wishes of all the people who were assembled for this

feast. He then distributed the Christmas gifts which filled our little family with great joy. The day passed happily; I allowed the two Novitiates to come together which was a grand feast for our indigenous Novices; they had prepared a table for their Sisters and they arranged themselves on benches round the Novitiate. I went to assist them at this little get-together which filled them with joy; I was happy on seeing my daughters so full of happiness.

During his stay in France, Monsignor Bonjean visited the Religious of Providence of Clermont-Ferrand many times and on these occasions he had got the Orphans of these Sisters interested in our indigenous Orphans. These good children who were touched to learn about children who were more poor than they and who were especially deprived of the precious gift of faith, promised to adopt a little non-Catholic child in our Orphanage at their expense. They undertook to send all the things she would need, e.g. rosary, medals, needles, pins etc., They started off by sending a parcel to their charge whom they desired to call Madeline - the name of their Mother Superior; a doll dressed like a Sister of Providence was sent to Madeline who did not exist then! We prayed to the good God to give us this child, the one the kind Orphans of Clermont desired to adopt. Our prayers were soon answered; a young pagan who had lost her husband and had no means of existence, brought her little four year old child to us; this little one appeared very intelligent with a charming character. She left her mother without much sorrow and followed me with joy. I took her first to the Chapel to offer her to Jesus, to put her under the protection of the Blessed Virgin. Madeline opened her big eyes and took in everything around her with astonishment. From the Chapel I led her to the Orphanage; when our Orphans saw this little child so happy and gracious, they were thrilled; each one wanted to see her, speak to her. Madeline appeared totally at ease, very happy with the many marks of affection shown to her. I told the children about the good work of the Orphans of Providence which touched them deeply. I have written to the generous children of Clermont to let them know about their little protégée who I am sure, they would love very much for she is indeed quite interesting.

Some days back we had a visit from one of our girls who had got married. She brought, a little angel, her baby that God had given her. I cannot tell you how happy we were, my good Mother, on seeing this dear infant, who without the Holy Childhood, would be a subject of Satan. This fruit of our Orphanage was put under the protection of Mary and, instead of a pagan name he would have received, he now received the beautiful name of Marian (Mary). Our little Marian was very lovable, he appeared happy, in the midst of so many white women. We dressed him in a lovely white dress which dear Mother St. Ligouri had sent us. In spite of his coffee colour he looked lovely in white; his young mother promised me that she would teach him to say the holy names of Jesus and Mary when he started to stammer.

A new teacher, a Protestant, arrived from England. There is an attempt to remove our students from us but I have great confidence that we will not lose a single one of them. After the death of our dear Orphans we have received three new non Catholic children; I do hope that divine Providence will soon fill these vacancies.

The work on our new building has been taken up again; it appears that we would be able to take up our residence there in the course of the year. What gives us great joy is that we would be separated from the Hindus and the Protestants who are around us now. At this moment in front of our Chapel, preparations are made to conduct a pagan wedding; from the windows we can see the huge platform where the musicians would be seated; we have to resign ourselves to the fact that for eight days until midnight we would have music which is truly infernal; one has to listen to it to have an idea of what it is. We must of course make our meditation in this din; at least, if we cannot pray we will try to be bored for love of God.

10 April, 1869

Since I know that you are interested in all that happens to your daughters, my good Mother, I come today to speak about an excursion we had during our vacation to the surroundings in Jaffna. On that day, we got up quite early and the Rev. Fr. Pro Vicar was good enough to give us Holy Mass at 5 a.m. After a light breakfast we all left some in vehicles, others in bullock carts. The children and also the Novices joined us. The route from Jaffna to Chavakachcheri was delightful - it was just one huge park. We went past rows of paddy fields, little trees with flowers, pink and white oleanders, lagoons formed by the sea which we saw at a distance. After this beautiful drive which lasted about two hours, we came to a Mission Church where the people had gathered since the previous evening. The church was poor which reminded me of the stable at Bethlehem; the hut of the Missionary was equally poor; of course, the whole set up was made of coconut leaves. The gardener and his wife, care-takers of the property had appropriated for themselves the best from the place; they had put new mats, chairs and a table; we were well installed. Almost all the population around that area are Hindus; the Christians are very few and very poor. The Missionary goes to visit them just once a year and stays for about eight days among them.

Very close to the property and separated only by a hedge of palm leaves is a huge tree which serves as a temple to the pagans. The previous day was precisely their great feast, the day of offerings, especially of new rice cooked in new pots. Around 2000 or more of these poor unbelievers were assembled under the banian tree for their diabolic ceremonies; we directed our steps towards this place; we arrived quite close to the hedge of the enclosure, we saw that the portion bordering the property of the Mission had been renewed that it was impossible for us to go further. I told two of our Postulants of St. Peter to go into our neighbouring woods to see if they could discover a passage to go through; they said we could go through; so all of us with an orphan going ahead of us followed; she cleared the way for us through the thickets; the branches were so intertwined that the

passage was difficult. Soon we came quite close to the enclosure and already a few of us were under the famous tree, when all of a sudden we heard dreadful shouts and some one cried out in a loud voice, "Do not come near; you Christians, you tarnish our holy place". At the same time we saw a man armed with an axe, his eyes burning with anger, who called to us to get back immediately; meanwhile, other men came and all got together; we told them calmly that we only wanted to examine this strange tree; since their anger seemed to get worse, I told everyone to return to the house. Our little group was a bit disappointed but it seemed to me that it was prudent to get back. We were able to satisfy our curiosity for in the afternoon during our walk in another direction we discovered a little path which led us to the banian tree; we followed the path which brought us close to the low hedge and we could see the interior of the temple of Satan, all of it as if we were inside the temple. We were alone but out of discretion, I told them not to get across the limits although some of my companions wanted very much to go in and overthrow the altar with the sacrificial objects. This tree is very dense so that the sun's rays cannot penetrate through its branches or leaves; it provided many little cabins or enclosures where the priest offers the sacrifices.

I can only tell you, my good Mother, how much our hearts were gripped at the thought of these poor souls who come here to this lonely place to offer their sacrifices to the prince of darkness. We recited many "AVE MARIAS" for these unfortunate pagans and also to drive away Satan from these regions. Then we turned our steps towards the sea which was quite close to us. We began to sing "AVE MARIA"; never had the praises of Mary been heard in this milieu; may this Mother of mercy obtain light for these souls plunged in the darkness of paganism! Our little children not knowing how to show their contempt for Satan went one by one to spit in his temple. The Christians of the Mission came to visit us; we made the children pray and to those who knew their prayers, I gave gifts of crosses, rosaries. Among those who surrounded me I saw some young girls who did not resemble

the others; they told me that they were non-Christians. When I told them that they should leave the way that goes to hell and become Catholics, they told me "We are not mistresses, and however much we would like to become Catholics, our parents would oppose us". These poor children caused me pain; they appeared reluctant to leave us; The Monsignor thinks that later when the produce from this property increased we could settle in marriage some of our orphans in this place and they would do good to the Christians and teach the children to pray.

A few days after this outing we went out to another place Colombogam - a mile from Jaffna, a pleasant property by the sea which was a residence of the orphans of St. Joseph. The Director of this Institution, Rev. Boisseau had invited all our children to tea at St. Joseph's. While our big family was taking its refreshments, I assisted with Rev. Fr. Boisseau at the engagement of Nicholas of the orphanage of St. Joseph with one of our best orphans. After a few days, Monsignor blessed this marriage in the Chapel of St. Joseph and it was a grand feast in Colombogam! One of the most respectable families in Jaffna paid the expenses for the marriage and spent the day in St. Joseph's. Rev. Fr. Boisseau wanted to give much solemnity to this marriage in order to show his appreciation for the good conduct of Nicholas and no one was jealous over it. That evening the newly married couple visited us, our parlour was full. Everything went off in a very decent manner; the women accompanied the bride; the men, the bridegroom, all walked in silence. After saying a word to each one, we blessed the new couple, received their wedding cake and returned to our solitude willingly. You see, my good Mother, that your daughters in Ceylon do all sorts of things but all with the same goal; the glory of God and the salvation of souls. We had another marriage celebrated - another of our orphans but without much noise; after the wedding Mass, which took place in the Cathedral, the newly married accompanied by the family of the groom, came to see us and left for their village.

The day of the feast of Our Lady's Espousals was fixed as the feast for the "Work of Dowries" (collection of dowries). On that day, Monsignor celebrated the Holy Mass in our Chapel for the benefactors of this work; our orphans sang and prayed specially for the persons who by their charity, had procured for our dear children the grace to safe - guard their faith in the world and to become good Christians.

Our Catholic children of the English class made their retreat. Rev. Fr. Keating preached and he was very much edified by the way our little girls comported themselves and by their spirit of recollection. A few days later, one of them desired vivaciously to become a member of the Propagation of the Faith. Since she could not get anything from her parents for this work, she told her companion who was in charge of the collection, "As I cannot give money for the Propagation of Faith, I will give all that I will get to buy sweets. In this way I will be a member of this Society" and this dear child persevered with zeal in this generous practice. Another of our pupils, a rich orphan, could not obtain from her guardian the modest subscription for the Holy Childhood; the poor child collected her beautiful engravings, begged another young girl to lend her 60 cents for her subscription and to keep these objects as pawns.

I received four new Postulants for the Novitiate of St. Peter's; one of them is from Jaffna; she is a charming young girl, the only child of the family; her poor mother, a widow, suffered much at the separation but she told me that since it was God's will, she did not oppose her. The other three came from Valligamam; for a long time these young girls had spoken to me about their desire to give themselves to the good God in the religious life but their parents would not consent; besides, they even harassed them a lot to get married without the freedom to decide. Seeing that it was useless to wait for their consent, they left their homes without telling anyone and came to me, all three, having journeyed all night, with their package under the arm. Their parents arrived soon after them; a similar attempt made by the

Hindu children was really an event. The parents tried all possible means to take them back; caresses, threats were all in vain; each day, new persons came to begin their attempts all over again. Once someone said that the Mother of one of them was very bad; next, it was the father of another girl who had become mad and given away his goods. Nothing succeeded in weakening the resolution of these dear children. The persecution began to get less and less and I do hope it will stop completely; I hope too that the prejudices against religious life will drop gradually in the measure that our holy religion becomes better known and better appreciated. Their customs play an important role and until now it is their custom that every one gets married; so they could not understand anything else.

Jaffna has received a Mission which has done a lot of good. I will not speak about it in detail, my good Mother, as probably the Annals of the OMI Fathers will give a summary about that but I would tell you how we are associated with the labours of our zealous Missionaries, during these days of grace. In the first place we helped with our prayers, then participated in the decorations - for processions, altars, the singing etc; our orphans sang Tamil hymns each evening and also at the Benediction which was accompanied by the organ. They did very well and I assure you that they were proud of their success. We are beginning to reap the fruits of the Mission; the parents send the children to class without letting them run around the streets which they did up to now. They think, quite naively, that education is not that important for women; that it is sufficient they know how to make the curry (strong Indian sauce) with which they are thorough; our day indigenous students are not many. The Bishop and the Priests have made the parents understand that these poor children have need of instruction, and they should be sent to us rather than let them get into bad habits. They are very obedient and we now have nowhere to place them. I assure you, my good Mother, there is a lot to do with this little crowd that is so used to running around the fields; it cannot be easy to keep them quiet, especially, in the little space where they find themselves so stuck together with the suffocating heat that we have at the moment.

This suffering, we hope will not last long for our new house will be soon complete. The Government has been good enough to open a road which leads us to the Church and is quite short and isolated; it will be called the Convent Street. It is already under construction and the Governor of Jaffna assured us that it would be finished at the same time as the Convent. It appears that the route is made just for us.

After the Mission, Monsignor has started a Congregation of the Ladies of Charity under the patronage of St. Anne. This Association has two aims: (1) to get clothes for poor women who cannot present themselves decently to Church. (2) to put us in contact with the mothers of families; His Lordship also entrusted to us the direction of this work with the intention of affiliating it with the Holy Family. The members are recruited from the richer Tamil women; they are about thirteen and already have assisted nineteen poor women.

A few days ago, a young girl, about sixteen years old was sent to me by His Lordship, asking me to take up the responsibility for the child. She had lost her parents when she was quite young; she was then entrusted to a Protestant family. She was told that her parents were Catholics but she does not know whether she has been baptised. The Protestants who were taking care of her left her to grow up without faith nor law; sometimes she would go to the Catholic Church with one of the neighbours. She was about to be given in marriage to a Hindu without telling her anything; and just as the marriage meal was being prepared, she was told about it. She firmly refused to get married and when she found that no one would listen to her, she begged of a Catholic woman to help her to come to the Convent, saying that she wished to become a Catholic. From that time she is with us, she studied attentively her prayers, her catechism and I hope she will soon be a member of our holy religion. They came to take her back but she refused to leave us and since they had no legal right over her they were compelled to leave her in peace.

A Postulant of St. Peter came to ask me permission to make an attempt to bring back one of her parents who refused to fulfil his religious role and had a great need to come close to God. I allowed her to go and sent a companion with her, asking them both to entrust this matter to the Blessed Virgin and to recite the rosary on the way for this intention. When they arrived, they found the poor sinner not well disposed; she was not discouraged and seriously challenged him to think of his soul. While they were there, the neighbours who were curious to know what these persons from the convent were up to, assembled around them. There were about twelve to fifteen of them. Our two Postulants profiting by the opportunity spoke to all as they knew that they were all in a sad state of disposition. They listened to them with attention and were touched by their devotedness. The audience was made up of Christians and others who were not living good lives, some pagans and all of them promised that they would think of their souls. When I saw these good dispositions, I sent our little Missionaries on some more occasions to exercise their zeal; they ended by converting some poor souls. Three women made their confession; one of them made it for the first time, another had not approached the sacrament for twelve years; they also got two children of eight and ten years, baptized; a young boy made his first communion. A pagan woman, who was married or rather living with a bad Christian decided to get baptized with her old mother and her grand child; they helped one another to prepare themselves and to learn their prayers; the husband desired also to get converted; he had promised to go to confession this week; The poor sinner on whose account the first step was taken, is not yet converted though he gives some solid hope; so let us pray a lot for him.

Some one has come to tell me recently about a young Portuguese girl about sixteen years of age who was born of a Catholic father and Protestant mother. She had received only Baptism but lived with her mother without practising her religion; she never went to Church because she did not have suitable clothes. I told her to come and she did; I promised her that I would,

through the Ladies of Charity, get her the necessary clothes so that she could go to Mass. I spoke to her about her first communion and I could see that the poor child was so happy about that. I advised her to come every day to our house to receive instructions and to prepare herself for this wonderful event.

She is beginning to know the essential things and I hope that soon this dear child who is really very interested will have the signal favour of sitting at the banquet of the Angels.

We have a neighbour who has not confessed for the last twelve years since her marriage to a Protestant and consequently has abandoned all her religious practices. During the Mission, we went in search of her to tell her to consider her soul; she appeared to be touched, wept bitterly over her past conduct but added that, for the moment she could not fulfil her mission as she was leaving Jaffna that day itself. She wanted a rosary which she promised to recite daily. The rest we entrusted to Mary that she would save her and I have no doubt about that; a few days later, she came back to Jaffna, quite sick; now she is better and well - disposed to be converted and lead a new life. She will prepare herself by the study of her catechism and her prayers which she had forgotten. We have also at the moment a young widow whom we prepare for holy baptism; she is the daughter of the woman who does our shopping, Pauline was baptised last year. She will name her daughter Octavia; Mother St. Bernard (General councillor in Bordeaux) will be her God Mother. Thank the good God with us, my good Mother, that He should deign to make use of your daughters to help some souls to enter the right way. Our only ambition is to do good to a large number of unbelievers and sinners. Please pray with us for this grace from our Divine Master.

17 July 1869.

This year the month of May has been most interesting apart from our little altar that was tastefully decorated, or the French, Latin, English and Tamil hymns that were sung with great

harmony and piety, this month brought us many sweet consolations. At the feet of Mary and under her holy protection, there was a retreat in Tamil for our indigenous Sisters in which some of our orphans who could profit also took part. The holy exercises were carried out with piety and recollection; all listened with profound attention to the instructions of the zealous and devoted preacher. His instruction on death touched them a lot. During the sermon the Rev. Preacher exclaimed: "Some one among you will die soon; perhaps it will be you", he said looking at one of the children seated in front of him; his finger pointing at one who was fourteen years old. A few days later, this child after a sickness which was very short, succumbed to it; before she died, she told them "I have made a good retreat; I am in peace". This death, I assure you, my good Mother, has strengthened their good resolutions and has made a deep impression especially on our dear children. During the retreat, we had prepared some catechumens for their holy baptism and some neophytes for their first communion; the latter since their Baptism, constantly solicited the grace, to receive the good God. Our good and worthy Bishop distributed the heavenly Manna on the closing day of the retreat. After Holy Mass he gave them the Sacrament of Confirmation. Their happiness was indeed great; one of the girls especially edified us a lot. She passed one part of the day at the feet of Jesus, shedding tears of joy, and gratitude. After their dinner, the Bishop called the retreatants together, gave them holy pictures but above all, he gave them as a good souvenir some good advice which they would not ever forget! In the evening, before the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, nine little pagans received, in Baptism, the robe of innocence; these little ones were most happy; they looked like the queens of the feast, with their crowns of white roses; we offered to Mary the bouquet of the retreat as it was she who presided over this holy exercise. I am sure dear Mary looked down with love on the pious sanctuary where at the moment the children with pure and well disposed souls were gathered.

The following day, His Lordship came to celebrate the feast of Pentecost in our Chapel; we had a celebration of another kind

but not less interesting. Three Postulants were going to strip themselves of their worldly trappings in order to receive the religious habit; one of them was of the English Novitiate and the other two, from the Novitiate of the Indigenous Sisters. The ceremonies took place in the Chapel, one in English, the other in Tamil. Our dear little Holy Family Novice took the name of M. Josephine; she had promised St. Joseph that she would take him as her Patron if he obtained for her the grace to overcome all the difficulties which were in her way to entering the Novitiate and she kept her word. The two Novices of St. Peter took their names: one Sr. Mary of St. Peter and the other Sr. M. Pauline. These three Novices of our big family were happy and grateful for the grace that the good God willed to give them in this poor country which is under the rule of idolatry and heresy and where virginity is despised. The different ceremonies were also good-bye celebrations; our good Bishop was going to the Island of Mannar, called during the time of St. Francis Xavier, the Island of Holy Martyrs, but today called the Island of bad Christians. That was the name given to it before the arrival of the new Apostle of Ceylon. His Lordship has carried out numerous conversions; these poor sinners seemed to wake up at the voice of their first Pastor; all came and fell at his feet to get reconciled with God and to receive the bread of life. His Lordship desires that we associate ourselves to his apostolate through our prayers, that each day our entire big Family comes together to pray to our Lord, to bless the works of the zealous Missionaries. May we contribute to the salvation of some of these dear souls, through our prayer!

We terminated the month of Mary with a beautiful procession of the Blessed Virgin; our children carried the statue of Mary which they placed on the different altars. During this break the people made the air resound with hymns in honour of our Immaculate Mother. It was truly touching, my good Mother, to see this crowd in prayer; some with their foreheads to the ground, others had their hands lifted towards heaven; some others, their arms crossed on their chests in an attitude of recollection, which spoke about their great love for the Blessed Virgin! The month of

the Sacred Heart was kept with great happiness this year. Soon we had at last, a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On the day of the feast, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed; this grace is as much precious to us as it is rare; we experienced more and more its worth. But what we understand above all, is that we are indeed privileged and how much the poor souls who are around us, are to be pitied. Our Congregation of the Ladies of Charity continue their good work; one of the points, in the rule that has just been distributed to the members, is that all these Ladies should become Associates of the Holy Family.

Our Sisters of St. Peter celebrated their patronal feast piously and joyfully. On the previous day, they all arrived to the evening recreation; each one carrying a flower in her hand and requesting permission to place the flower in front of our venerated good Father. Not only did I accede to their just desire, but I accompanied the happy band. After each one had very respectfully presented her bouquet and kissed the paternal hand which loved so much to bless, I noticed that one of the last arrivals, a young simple and pious girl stood near the venerated image of our beloved Founder, with the gaze fixed and hands joined, heard nothing of what went on around her; she seemed to be absorbed in prayer or in a mysterious conversation with her heavenly Father... I was so moved in the presence of this filial piety that I thought that at this moment, our Good Father, listened with pleasure to this prayer of his little daughter and blessed the dear flock confided to my care; I prayed to him to bless also the poor Mother, so eager to see this new and interesting family walk in the ways of perfection which the Holy Family has traced out for it.

The young Portuguese girl, about whom I spoke some time back, had the happiness of making her first communion; she now conducts herself very well and comes each Sunday to Mass in our Chapel. On the vigil of St. Peter, she came with her mother, who wished to thank me for all that we had done for her daughter. This woman is a Protestant; I told her that we would willingly render her the same service rendered to her daughter;

she was very far from thinking about my proposition and gave me a whole lot of objections; I insisted and in order to be rid of me, she replied she would think about it. I remembered then that it was the vigil of our venerated Founder's feast and I asked if she would accept a medal. "Oh! that is not difficult", she answered. I found her a medal that had touched the good Father's body and gave it to this poor heretic, praying to our Lord for her conversion. My Portuguese lady received the medal which I put around her neck; she took care to hide it so that others could not see it. The following day one of her neighbours who is a Catholic told me that our Protestant had decided to give up her religion, that already she had learnt to make the sign of the cross and in the corner of her room all alone she was seen making the sacred sign. From then on, she continues to study her prayers; she has some difficulty in committing these to memory but she makes an effort with a lot of good will that the good God cannot fail to bless her efforts.

10 October 1869

Our Ladies of Charity celebrated the patronal feast of St. Anne, on 26th of July in our Chapel. Rev. Fr. Parish Priest said the Mass and preached in Tamil; our orphans sang also in Tamil as these Ladies are all Tamils and they understand only their language; in the evening they all came for the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. This little Congregation continues its good work for the glory of God.

Our children of the Holy Family had their annual lottery for the benefit of the Propagation of the Faith and the Holy childhood. After the draw, there was the magic show (lantern) which the orphans had lent to us; the joy was universal for the natives love very much these sorts of amusements and so our little black ones were happy beyond words. The lottery brought 130 francs, a big sum, if we think of all the trouble our poor children had to go through to get this much. Many among them had imposed on

themselves real sacrifices whether to get the prizes or to buy the tickets. Marie, a young child of ten, saw that one of her companions who was once well off, had lost her parents and could not buy the tickets; her heart was moved and she slipped all the money she had into the hands of her companion. She then asked her mother what she ought to do on this occasion of the lottery, Our children are generally generous; if they were rich they would be happy to do good and in spite of their poor resources they never back out when it is a question of a good work. During the Mission, the Christians of Jaffna were asked to contribute towards buying a magnificent crown for our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Recently, the Rev. Parish Priest remarked that a crown for the Infant Jesus was necessary and he appealed to the children for this gift. His words found a sympathetic echo in the hearts of all our dear students who immediately started to act; the Indigenous children on their side and the English students on theirs. It became very difficult for our orphans as these poor children had nothing; but their charity was ingenious; they made collections from the external students. They pooled with this little sum the few cents they had received from their parents and managed to offer 07 francs. Among the English students, their good will was full although they lacked in resources. One of them did not have any money but she had some jewels, and without hesitation she chose the most valuable among them, a gold chain with a value of 25 francs; another had a heart of gold (a pendant) the last gift from her dying father which cost her a lot to part with. However, the desire to put the jewel on the crown of Jesus carried her away and she made that sacrifice generously. A third child offered the only jewel she had, a pair of earrings; these three objects along with the collection brought a convenient sum which the Rev. Fr. Parish Priest was very happy to receive since he knew its source.

On the day of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, the youngest among our boarders dressed up a little child; they themselves made clothes for the child, even the little bonnet with a red fringe; everything was so magnificent. Our beautiful Anna was the daughter of Augustine, a member of the Holy Childhood, whom we had

got married to a man from the orphanage of St. Joseph. Soon after Holy Mass, the parents brought their dear little Anna to us. She was very sweet with her little bronze coloured face surrounded with red and white trimmings. We have already four little angels born of our members of the Holy Childhood. One of them flew away to heaven, a few months after her birth; she went to join her mother who preceded her some days ahead. How thankful we have to be to the good God for the good fortune he had given to our little ones who without the work of the Holy childhood, would be lost in the darkness of paganism!

If this fine work furnished us with the occasion to spread the Kingdom of Jesus, hell does everything it can to put hindrances to this Mission and we come to achieve good results only through overcoming many difficulties. This happens often at the time when we go to fix a marriage for one of our dear children; the obstacles appear and it is quite rare that we are able to bring a marriage to a good end without being tried severely. Some days back, I proposed to one of our best girls that she accept to marry a good Christian, a man of her caste; there were (many) real advantages in this marriage. With her usual docility, Agnes replied, "I will do whatever Reverend Mother desires". I told about our decision to her mother who showed that she was consenting to this marriage for her daughter. This woman was a strong pagan, guardian of a temple who also knew some diabolical tricks, one of which she played on us. Since she had not ever seen Agnes without a Sister, she held her so tight that she disturbed the mind of the poor girl who then came to tell me that she no longer wanted this proposal as it displeased her mother. My suggestions, my advice, those of the Fathers who were kind enough to talk to her, were all in vain. Agnes resembled a little tiger. We were so much saddened by this conduct that we began to fear the bad effect she could have on our orphans. In fact, if these poor children, on these occasions, followed the advice of their parents, all the good we could do for them would be destroyed. Besides, I got all the people in the house to pray for this estranged soul so that she would understand better the gravity of the fault and the danger

that could result from it. For this intention the orphans took their rice without curry, the Sisters of St. Peter fasted and all of us prayed a lot to Mary, the powerful enemy of Satan. Within three days the heart of Agnes changed; she asked pardon from me and confessed that she was not aware of what she did; that she had acted that way in spite of herself. Her confession made me think that her mother had used some evil means to change her. When the pagans want to get what they desire, they will give to the person, whom they have decided to influence, some thing they call "medicine", this will make that person do just what the other wants. I warned Agnes that she carefully refrain from taking anything her mother would give her. A few days later, this old sorcerer came back with fruits and cakes which were immediately buried in the garden. Our poor girl had to stay away from her mother and this last gesture literally enraged the woman. She began again her woes and concluded that she would bring a pagan who would become a Catholic to marry Agnes. Then she asked to meet her daughter to give her something which she had in a box. Sister dismissed her saying, "Go away. We know what you want. Take away your 'medicine' with you". Seeing that her trick was discovered, she blackened with anger for the natives do not become red, (blush); but before she left she tried her best in vain to win over our parlour maid. She appeared to have given up her evil designs; she left us in peace and Agnes will soon get married to a Catholic.

This account is a bit long, but I decided to give this in detail to make you understand a part of our difficulties on the subject of our work on marriage apostolate.

We have discovered, lately, that the woman who brings us milk had not made her first communion, that she had never confessed, does not know any prayers; neither does she know that there is a God nor that she has a soul; she is only sure that she had been baptised in the Catholic Church. You can very well understand, my good Mother, how we put ourselves out to instruct her in every way; she also put in a lot of good will and last

Sunday for the first time, she approached the holy Banquet; I hope there won't be any delay for her to receive the sacrament of Confirmation and this will be one more sheep added to the flock of our Father. What a lot of souls will love God, if they have the happiness to know Him!

I received a new Postulant for the Novitiate of St. Peter. It was a child from a respectable Catholic family. She had been in the Holy Childhood in principle. It is three years since she left us to join her mother who was remarried in Trincomalee. A year after her return to the world Marianne felt a lively desire to consecrate herself to the Good God in our indigenous Congregation. She wrote to me saying that this thought did not leave her. The Missionary of that part of the country wrote to me that he too believed that she was called to this holy vocation. After two years of waiting, this dear girl was able to come to us; Her grand-father a good Indian accompanied her; he was very moved at this separation from his grand daughter and could not restrain his tears but he was very generous. Marianne is intelligent and has a serious character. She will make a good Teacher of the Tamil Class.

Our new house is at last finished; at this moment the labourers will wind up and will have to clear up the garden which is in a complete mess. Our orphans have already begun to be occupied with that; every evening after school they go there and it is truly interesting to see them work with so much enthusiasm; some carry the sand, the stones and also the trees that were pulled down; the others pull out the bad weeds and burn them etc. This year the feast of the Holy Angels fell on Saturday, a holiday for our children; I let our dear orphans spend the day in the garden and they were so happy that they promised me to do much work there. After dinner they then left to do their work with enthusiasm; they were already at their work for some time, when three little girls who were pulling out the thorn bushes near a broken down room began to shout "Ayo oru pambu". The gardener, the Sister, other children began to run; in fact it was a snake but a rattle snake! You know, my good Mother, how much this species

is dangerous; everyone was seized with fear; in the meantime the older ones, with courage, helped the gardener to kill this enormous serpent; it was about two meters in length. Around five o'clock, I went to visit our little workers who came running to me, carrying at the end of a stick a viper which they had just slain; they put it near me saying "It is very, very bad". I complimented them for their courage and with one of my Sisters, I went towards the house where I met another child running towards me, "Mother, come please. We have found an animal we do not want to kill without showing you". Coming to the group, I saw not one but four black scorpions and you know, my good Mother, one bite of these can cause immediate death; one was huge and the mere sight of its sting gave me a shudder. The children hurried to stone these dreadful creatures. At the same time, they were greatly impressed with the dangers that they encountered during that day. They attributed their safety to their guardian Angels who had protected them and they were deeply thankful to them.

Permit me, my good Mother, to repeat to you the conversation I had recently with the daughter of a Protestant Minister. She, on many occasions, had taken part in her father's ministry - as a missionary of errors. This young lady had put in our boarding a young girl who had been given to her charge. At the end of a long visit which annoyed me somewhat, she said, "I am afraid to keep you a long time, but I must admit that I find here something I cannot explain; it seems to me that one breathes a calm which one does not find else where. I think you ought to be very happy". She stopped for a moment and then continued, "However, our Pastors cannot bear that people send their children to you and are angry with those who do so". I told her that I was surprised for we do not force anyone to become a Catholic and our Protestant pupils are not obliged to learn the Catholic doctrine". "Oh! it is not your teachings that these gentlemen question but it is your example. The virtue and the good that you do are more attractive than words. I too would love to do good, for my life is my responsibility; Tell me what I could do to make myself useful?". I smiled, for she understood me and told me, "You wish

that I begin with myself but I cannot!" The poor girl caused me pain, for I believe she is far from the truth but I was delighted to know that despite their bitterness against us, these preachers of error are obliged to admit that the Catholic religion is producing good works.

26 October 1870

Extract from the Jaffna to Kurunegala Journey

My good Mother,

I am going to give a resume of the correspondence of the Foundresses of Kurunegala, just to give you an idea of a journey by land in this region.

Our Sisters left Jaffna on 29th August - after receiving Him who alone knows how to inspire generous sacrifices and gives the strength to carry them out. Nevertheless, there were many tears shed on all sides; for the last eight years we had been in a foreign land and this was the first separation. Thus to distance oneself from one's Mother (Superior) and the Sisters, was to renew the big sacrifice one had made of one's family and one's mother-land! Therefore, one wept; the adieus were said as if one would not see one another again, reciprocally promises were made to think of one another before God daily, and then came the final good-bye. Our dear Mother desired to accompany her daughters up to Chavakachchery, ten miles from Jaffna. At three o'clock, our Sisters for the last time embraced her whose concern would follow them in their new mission. Mother Xavier's heart was in pain on seeing her dear daughters depart and especially when she thought of the fatigues that they were going to endure in the vehicles that had such little comfort and were unfit for their long journey.

Our travellers also understood well but their generosity was undaunted by these sufferings; they were happy to offer these up to God for our poor and unfortunate Mother - Land! The little caravan consisted of five carts three for the fathers and the two Brothers who accompanied them, the fourth for the three European Sisters and the fifth for the three native Sisters. Here, I must tell you my Good Mother, about the famous carts that are used for journeys. They are about 1.80 meters in length, 2.50 meters in height; they are covered with bamboo sticks and over them was straw and coconut leaves which served to ward off the sun's heat or the rain. A floor board is raised about two feet above the cart floor within which the pieces of luggage have to be put. This board is securely fixed on the two sides of the carriage and covered with some straw which is the apartment for the travellers. The top space which the Sisters occupied gave them the chance to feel more the jolts caused by the bad roads and the coupling of the bulls which were not used to draw the cart together. In this room there were no seats and one had to stretch oneself but our Sisters were three and there was not enough space; and they had to sit on the floor board. This position was not any helpful for their legs. They had brought little chairs but they were only useful when they encamped. In this sort of journey, no provisions could be found anywhere; consequently they had to take the wherewith to exist for eight or ten days as well as all the necessary utensils to prepare the food i.e. cooking rice etc. Along the route we find small houses belonging to the Government which one calls Rest House; our Sisters stopped two or three times to spend the night in these huts; but the dirty surroundings and the fear caused by the savage beasts hindered their sleep. Sometimes, in the midst of the woods, they heard the elephants break the branches, and eat them! One of the things they suffered from was the lack of water; often they found only muddy water and they had to be satisfied with that. In these journeys one is obliged to make frequent halts; one cannot travel in the terrible heat, nor even at night; also from time to time the bulls must be let free to breathe; they must also have something to eat.

The roads are extremely bad, even dangerous in certain places. Sometimes there are the high hills which have to be climbed; the slopes are rather steep so that the carts risked being dragged into the precipices that are below these peaks. On the other hand, there are the roads that are so frightening; here, some boulders, enormous trunks of trees that block our passage; there are pot-holes which oblige the driver to keep to one side in order to avoid accidents. "Well" said one Sister, "We should thank God a thousand times a day, for preserving us from all those dangers".

The first stop was at nine thirty p.m. in a place called Pulopalle; the moon had disappeared in the clouds and it was completely dark. Great was the confusion when the persons had to get down with all their cooking utensils; the travellers were already suffering from stiff legs and backs. Nevertheless, they hastened to cook their light meal in the open and although the meal was somewhat smoked, it renewed their strength and gave them courage. In order to take some rest they spread out their mattresses and their mats in a room which, alas, was far from clean. In vain they tried to sleep. During the whole night the bulls shook their bells, a little child did not stop crying, so much so that our poor Sisters, in spite of the good a little sleep could have given them, they had to pass a "blank" night. At 3.30 a.m. they had to think of leaving. They hurriedly took a bit of coffee, put all their things inside the cart and they climbed with the help of a ladder on to their sitting places. They went on until it was very hot. At each break, my good Mother, the Sisters had the same problems. One day, one of our Sisters, while rolling up her mat, found one of those dangerous spiders called "tarantula"; thank god, she was not harmed. You ask without doubt how the cries of a child can disturb the Sisters as these areas are not inhabited. Well! an unfortunate pagan woman who wanted to fulfil a vow she had made to the devil, came 160 miles on foot; she had followed our Missionaries from Chavakachcheri carrying her baby that was just a year and half old.

If the journey was painful and long, at least there was not any annoyance of monotony; at each new departure, there was such agitation, running around and hurrying that one could say that it was a question of leaving for China! While our Sisters were engaged in cooking at a huge plantation of coconut trees around them, all of a sudden the cart stopped with a terrible jolt. Sr. Marie Joseph, wondering what was happening, held on firmly to the vehicle and thanks to this precaution, nothing happened to her but it was not the same for the others; Sr. Stanislaus said, "We heard cries. You clumsy fellow, hold yourself fast. Alas! It was too late. We were already down below; luckily for us we would have gone off, through sheer fright".

The second camping was out in the open; the heat was suffocating and our Sisters could not find even a shade under a tree to protect themselves from the rays of the sun and, therefore, their bodies, their hands swelled because of the heat. They had just a bit of muddy water to refresh themselves. Some hours later they had to cross a part of the sea which caused them much fright. In fact, this passage was very dangerous; their first thought was to recommend themselves to the Blessed virgin and then they entered in to the water. In such situations there is always a man who walks in front of the bulls to gauge the depth of the sea. The wind blew strongly causing such huge waves that the poor animals walked with their head painfully lifted up. Finally after some tense moments, they reached the other shore without any accident. Our Sisters were just beginning to calm their feelings when frightening cries were again heard; this time it was the drivers who wanted to urge the bulls to climb up a slope; so they shouted and howled at them. A Sister says, "After these difficult moments, there were such loving gestures, amazing when we consider how little civilised our poor natives were; we saw them stroking and caressing the animals from whom they received some service. It is true then that the instinct of gratitude exists in all beings even in the hearts of savages."

Up to this point nature was a little varied; there were only coconut plantations; now our travellers have come into the jungles; these are wild forests inhabited by tigers and elephants. It is here we find a little insect (onni) leech, which gets into the flesh and causes itching which is a real suffering; luckily there are those who know the secret of ridding themselves of it. It is got rid of by rubbing oil on the affected part and the insect drops off. I know of this little insect since our Sisters who were not careful had bad legs for many days.

At Olliapallum, our travellers slept for the first time in their life in the open; the plain was their room. This place is found in the midst of the jungles; at one time the moon began to appear; in her soft and gentle light, they were able to enjoy the charming tableaux nature presented to them. A light breeze refreshed them pleasantly.

"We were seated on our mats" said Sr. Marie Josephine, "surrounded by ten or twelve carts, their bulls sleeping close to us. Each one prepared her/his meal; the brightness projected by the fires gave a picturesque sight to our camp in the midst of the wild jungle. We had our evening prayer under the light of the stars, under God's gaze and then we disposed ourselves to go to sleep. But it was not the easiest thing to do. It was impossible for us to get into the carts - three in the one and the same, so two of our native Sisters spread out their mats on the ground under one of the carts and slept there; in this way we could sleep a bit with the drivers and the bulls as our guardians. The night was calm and at 6 o'clock in the morning, we resumed our march". The beauties of nature helped our poor travellers to forget the fatigue and the discomfort which afflicted them. From the time they left Jaffna they could not change their clothes; you may judge, my good mother, in what state they found themselves, covered with sweat and dust. Large majestic trees bordered their route and their tops reunited to form a perfect arch over them; here and there were little bushes in full bloom (resembling the climate) of different colours; beautiful birds with green and gold feathers hopped from

branch to branch and charmed us by their melodious chirping; numerous butterflies of all kinds; all sizes, of all shades fluttered from flower to flower; the monkeys in numerous troops frolicked joyfully in the forests and crossed our roads in all directions.

One day, in order to relax a bit, our Sisters walked in front of the carts when they encountered something disagreeable - a herd of buffaloes; thus they were forced promptly to get back to their "houses on wheels". Almost at every meal the water they had to take was excessively polluted, our Missionaries said. Once they had to stay in a camp all day as they could not find water.

In the areas surrounding Kokavil, the roads were bad; the carts had to go over huge rocks and tree trunks, which seemed to overturn the carts. Finally we came to a slope that was so steep that two men had to hold the bulls, one on each side of the cart and two strong men had to stay behind them to stop them from falling. They gave such wild cries that one would have thought that the carts were going down the precipice. Emotions followed one another; while our Sisters were making their general examination of conscience they suddenly felt a strong jolt; the bulls drew the cart each in a different direction so that the cart almost overturned; this happened because a serpent crossed the road a few feet ahead of us; the same thing happened over and over again. There was a herd of buffaloes; once towards nightfall, they perceived a black mass and their fear was justified; there were three elephants; happily for our travellers these animals were tied firmly to three trees; the cart drivers blindfolded the bulls and they crossed over to the other side without a word.

The 2nd of September, our poor Sisters were broken down. In Srambokulam they could only find a small unhealthy room filled with insects. Overcome with fatigue and sleep, they rested a little and got back to their carts. They arrived at mid-day at the small Mission Post, Pacoo Seringa Rambokulam; the bulls refused to go further and so they were forced to stop. The poor Christians of this area offered our Sisters milk, eggs, whatever they could spare.

They were dumbfounded to see the religious; it was something new to them; they stayed there until the afternoon to look at them. Their little Church, if one could call it that, is built of mud and resembled exactly the other houses. It had two rooms where our Sisters took their meals, but it was impossible to sleep as there was no air inside; therefore, they went resigned back to their carts where they slept very little and very badly. The caravan then got back to the road.

At Semelacutchy there was a thunderstorm; it was quite hot and the roads became more and more difficult; the drivers and the bulls were dripping with sweat. A little before they came to Katavachy, there was a rough mound to climb; when they were almost at the top, the bulls of the first cart slipped, the cart pushed backwards and was going to collide with the other carts; then the men in order to stir up the bulls gave such loud cries, our Sisters were so scared and asked to get down from the carts; fortunately the Blessed Virgin ceaselessly watched over them and they reached Semelacutchy without accident. The Christians of the village brought them rice, chickens, eggs and to thank them, the Sisters could only give them the satisfaction of letting them look at them as long as they wanted. In these journeys, one must as far as possible avoid contradicting the cart drivers and it will be dangerous to oppose them or provoke their resentment. They should be let to do things without telling them anything.

One evening the moon was out in full splendour and it was easy to continue the journey. The drivers decided to stop saying that the bulls were tired; they untied the animals and the caravan was obliged to park for two hours. No one could say anything for it was useless to point out to them that it was more advantageous to continue the journey. The Tamil understands only what he wants to understand.

Sunday, 4 September, they arrived in Anuradhapura; it was that the good God had prepared a little rest for our poor travellers, in the house of Philip, a former domestic of Mgr. Semeria. He

was happy and felt it an honour to welcome our Sisters in his house. In this place there were very few Christians and a very small Church, visited once a year by the Missionary. It was there that our travellers received the first letter from our Mother; one can judge the joy they experienced and the compensation, this letter brought for all the deprivations and sufferings they endured. Since their departure, the Priest was not able to celebrate Holy Mass, also our Sisters were happy when he told them they were going to have the consolation of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice. They returned to the house of Philip; his house was very well arranged, three beds, all white, were prepared for our Sisters to rest. Everything was so delicately organised for their comfort that one could say that everything was provided by the hands and heart of a mother.

An awful thunderstorm that was threatening for some days, finally broke out. Torrential rain and violent winds caused floods in the house, and there was only one room where the whole group could rest. A bonnet that was left on the bed was all soaked wet, the Sister to whom it belonged was somewhat annoyed, the Priest told her: "Why be disturbed? Dry it and you can wear it tomorrow"

The thunderstorm cleared up. While the Sisters retired to their room to sleep, they thought that they heard the hissing of a snake; they immediately called Philip who without being upset said: "No, one serpent; no afraid, Sisters; nothing harm you in my house; you not fear; you not fear!". The night was very calm and the sleep did a lot of good to our Sisters. The next day, inspite of the rain, they visited the ruins of Anuradhapura. In this ancient enclosure, one sees first a sort of vestibule of which about eighty pillars remain; they are of granite. After the vestibule one finds the Temple, at the entrance of which is a semi-circular (moon-stone) slab on which are sculptured signs and elephants. This structure is 2000 years old. On the first floor on either side are two busts of nine feet in height. A pretty stair case of stone leads to the second floor, where one sees rooms in which are put the

sacred offerings. On the third floor is the sacred tree. At the foot of this tree one finds the altar on which the victims are sacrificed. The branches of this gigantic tree (Bo tree) are held up with iron rods to stop them from falling to the ground; at the entrance is a plaque of marble which tells of the origin of this divine tree, it reads; a Buddhist cut a branch of the Bo tree in some place in India, with a golden knife and this branch went up into the sky and then descended on earth very near a place called Colombogam; later it was brought to Anuradhapura where it has become a magnificent tree.

By the time our Sisters arrived at the Temple the ceremonies had begun. They asked if they could go on the last flight of steps which separated the altar and the sacred tree. "You may" replied a Buddhist, "but you should remove your shoes beforehand; Your God is God, so is mine, you make people respect your God; I must make others respect mine". Sr. Marie Josephine dared to tell this fanatic that her shoes were also as sacred as the tree and they went up. At that time this man became furious and shouted at them "You will suffer the consequences of your sacrilege. Our Gods will punish you. A few days back, a young European dared to disrespect the Banyan (Bo-Tree) and after a week he died, his mouth full of sores". Our Sisters got so scared, not about the threats but of the eyes of the unhappy pagan who was so angry. They came down and went to visit the ruins of a Buddhist monastery. This monument is sustained by six hundred pillars of a single block of granite; it has nine storeys containing a thousand rooms. The top most floor is reserved for the Senior Priest; not far from there one sees the ruins of a monastery for women.

Having forgotten their fatigues and completed their little excursions our Sisters started again on their journey. When they wanted to thank Philip for his hospitality, he replied in his English, "No any thank you, no say thank you, God give me, I give you, I happy to give you!" Towards five o'clock he met an uncivilised person whom he knew who told him, "You should camp here this

evening. A little further on you will only find water that is very bad and you are not going there before night fall. I will leave you my shed and I will return quite late". But the people who guarded the shed refused to accept the Missionaries for they were Buddhists. The little caravan was obliged to camp along the route.

The temperature was very heavy; by a visible heavenly protection the rain clouds remained sort of suspended over the heads of our travellers, without daring to drop their rain, while it rained all around them.

At Pamboualtam the drivers could no longer recognize their route which caused discussions among them; they stopped the first two carts, untied the bulls without saying a word, letting all of a sudden, the shaft of the first cart to fall which made the Brothers fall below; one of them hurt his leg, but this accident did not have any annoying repercussions.

They arrived at Oullapulle towards mid-day and our travellers took shelter in a little hut; at two o'clock they had only their black coffee. At three, their meals were ready; they ate and refreshed themselves. One of the Brothers, after dinner, came, all happy to offer a cup of coffee to his travelling companions, thinking that there was a chair within his reach, he sat down but there was not any. Great was his disappointment when he saw his cup empty even though he did not let go of it in his fall. He got teased a lot at his discomfiture. There was a bit of fun. Until the following break, one could only think of the tiredness of the journey; the roads became worse and it rained heavily. It was 8th September; the feast of the Nativity of Mary, the last and difficult day for our travellers. The thought of these two events renewed their courage and sustained them. They stopped in a little hut, arranged an altar and the Holy sacrifice was celebrated; our Sisters received the Bread of the strong; the divine food strengthened their generosity, consoled and fortified them. The little caravan was again in need of a special protection for they had to cross a last but very dangerous part; it was such a steep downward slope that from the top of the mountain one could not see anything below. Besides, there was a river to be crossed. Three carts were al-

ready on the other bank. The bulls of the last two carts came to the edge of the water and refused to budge. The drivers were obliged to beat them and to shout at them; finally, after much anxiety and pain they got across without any accident.

At the last rest house, our Sisters got into their black robes to make their entry into Kurunegala.

The day was ending, rain fell in torrents; nevertheless, groups of people waited for the Sisters for miles to escort them and to announce their arrival with gun shots. When they neared the town they had to leave their vehicles and in spite of the rain get into four open vehicles and were taken triumphantly.

The Rev. Fr. Curate waited for them with great impatience. Their first visit was to the little Church, decorated gracefully. A curious crowd flocked around them. There was the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament after which they went to the house of the Curate. A complimentary address was read to the Sisters and they had a good dinner; they then went to their simple house, thanking God a thousand times, for He had ceaselessly watched over them. They desired only to make Him known and loved. The night's rest made them soon forget their fatigue and their deprivations. The good Master was happy with the generosity of his spouses and we hope He will not abandon them; up to the present moment, the news we have had from them could not be any better.

Jaffna, 30 Jan. 1871

The misfortunes that have befallen France afflict us terribly. In my last letter, I told you, my good Mother, that we fear that very soon we may be forced to abandon some of our dear children. Alas! already three of them have been sent home to their parents; we have still a dozen non Catholics; they are all ready to

receive Baptism, but we have to refuse them this grace, for the moment, for once baptized we cannot risk exposing their faith. As for those who have already received this grace, we have to see to it that they safeguard it and for this we need to count on divine Providence; our resources are very limited. But our divine Saviour has promised that he will never abandon those who trust in Him. He alone is my hope; this feeling of confidence is all the greater because we lack all human means. This year our sale was not a success either; still, God acts according to his pleasure! However, in the midst of all our misfortunes, He sends us time and again some consolations; thanks to the many souls who desire to give glory to God, we were able to give two of our Orphans in marriage to good Catholics and thus form families that are profoundly Christian. A few days ago, a rich Catholic from Jaffna sent me forty measures of rice for our poor children. There you see, my good Mother, a maternal attention of divine Providence.

Although we were hardly disposed to rejoice, because of our children, we had to give an air of festivity to our distribution of prizes. Only the Priests assisted at this function.

Our Missionary Sisters arrived on 2nd January; we waited for them with impatience, for their return journey to Jaffna was still more dangerous than the one they made to go to Kurunegala. The good God had watched over them, they are in good health, but broken with fatigue.

I send you an account of this new journey for I know it will interest you, my good mother; you will be happy to see with what generosity Sr. Mary Joseph and Sr. Patrick have borne all their fatigue. But they did not come alone. We had the joy of seeing our good Bishop, at the same time. The day after his arrival, Monsignor came to visit us. We received him in a hall that was magnificently decorated. Our little English children sang very well in their tongue and gave a short dialogue that related to the situation; an orphan child offered him wishes in the name of all her

companions. Our Protestant children too took part in the feast. Monsignor appeared happy to find himself in the midst of his children and we in our hearts thanked God to have given him to our respectful affection.

Monsignor himself wished to open our retreat on 16 of January. Rev. Fr. Pullicani preached it but His Lordship also addressed us often. The days of grace came to a close on 23rd January. The whole day, we had exposition of the Blessed Sacrament; our good Bishop celebrated Holy Mass. In the evening, he gave an instruction which was followed by Benediction. During these rich moments our prayers, our most ardent promises ascended to God, for our family and our Motherland! I have much confidence that this retreat will produce more fruits. Our Sisters have begun their work with devotedness; they discharge their responsibilities to the best of their ability, but their success is desirable! Ah! In a heretical country, difficulties abound when it is a question of making God known!....

Jaffna. 1 February, 1871

Extract From The Account Of The Return Journey From Kurunegala To Jaffna.

My good Mother,

Since the account of the journey from Jaffna to Kurunegala interested you, our Mother is certain that the details of the Sisters' return to Jaffna will give you pleasure.

On 15 November our Sisters left Kurunegala with Monsignor, Rev. Fr. Pullicani, who accompanied His Lordship and a Brother. They came to the Railway Station, which is two hours journey from the Town and there they took the mail coach to Colombo from where they take the ship to Jaffna.

Our Sisters stayed with the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. They were received like our Sisters who arrived from Europe fifteen days before. They too, like us were in Cairo. They were so kind and good-so very characteristic of them. Our Sisters thought of staying just two days in Colombo, their luggage was aboard, everything was ready for the departure and the time too was fixed, when at 8.30 p.m. some one came and told them that the Captain had not received the permit and their departure was delayed; but the real reason was that since the winds were contrary it was dangerous to embark; two ships that left some days earlier were obliged to return to the harbour. It appeared then that they had to give up the sea voyage or to wait until the winds were favourable, that could be some months. This delay was too long and Monsignor decided to leave by cart if he could not do otherwise.

In the afternoon Rev.Fr.Pullicani came to look for our Sisters so that they could say good-bye to our Bishop for he did not want to take them with him. The Missionaries were greatly disappointed, especially, Sr.M.Joseph who knew well how necessary it was for her to be in Jaffna for the sale; she did not lose hope but prayed, such a lot that she won her point. In vain, Monsignor objected, telling them of the dangers of the journey, the lakes to be crossed, the muddy roads they would have to jump over; perhaps they would have to go on horseback or even wait for eight days beside a lake, before traversing it; to everything she had an answer. Finally, Monsignor, asked, "What happens if you get fever"? "I have a supply of quinine with me", she said. "What a woman wants, God wants, is a proverb; His Lordship agreed to their departure and made them promise that they would not be sick nor tired etc. The next morning they were to be ready to leave at 7 o'clock or he would leave them behind. Sr. Marie Joseph promised to do everything and she was at the Railway Station at 6.30 long before the Monsignor. A good Sinhalese came with an offering to the Priest whom he knew earlier and for whom he had much respect; others sent our Sisters some oranges and a box of biscuits. During their stay in Colombo, our Sisters

received many visits and among these was one from the father of two of our Boarders. He was getting ready to go to Jaffna to bring back his daughters but on seeing our dear travellers, he changed his plan and instead of removing these children who were with us already, he confided his third little daughter to us. It was an embarrassment to our Sisters but not at all an obstacle.

Our travellers proceeded towards Kandy. The train traversed a delightful country side. On all sides there are mountains, some cultivated, some dry, the valley and the hill slopes with trees of every kind; here, one finds the famous taliput, the Indian papyrus which is used for writing and just as I am writing to you, I have before me, my good Mother, the lithography of one of the sites here made of these leaves. There one sees a number of bushes of silvery white. Here and there were fields of paddy like gardens of green velvet, of different sizes and shades, which reach up to the top of the mountain that was covered with coffee plantation. The coffee plant is a charming little bush bearing red berries that look like corals. On all sides of the mountains are as many cascades, as there are echelons of limpid water which gets lost in the valleys in soft murmur. Their charming nature is indeed God's worthy throne; she seems in her silent grandeur to mock human beings and their works of art which are always far from equalling in grace and perfection, the simple flower of the field! How can one not be inspired or not exalted with emotion by the infinite power of the one who rejoiced in creating such marvels.

Another sort of experience awaited our Sisters in a place called the Rock of Sensations. The route here is extremely dangerous. It is 1,300 feet above sea level in elevation; it is hollowed out in a rock the summit of which reaches such a prodigious height that it looks as if it will collapse in on itself. On the opposite side are chasms so frightful and of such depth that a traveller writes, "In spite of the wealth of vegetation which hides appearances, men are like points that can hardly be seen and the river which is quite noteworthy resembles a silver thread. He who

passes this sharp edge of the rock without feeling terrified has no idea of what will happen when the train derails; he will be quite composed" he says "As for us" he continues, "we assure that having kept close to the edge of the precipice, either crossing it through a narrow space or in crossing rapidly by a plane, we cannot ever get rid of this feeling of the sublime". This is indeed the route hollowed in the rock which goes up. It turns continually, the tip of the parapet alongside the precipice where the road goes, is not long; the tunnels are long and quite close to one another. Sometimes abundant springs of water gush forth from the rocks and fall as cascades. Little by little as one goes further, the gorge becomes less deep and the scenery changes. Cultivation on the slopes of the mountains and habitation are dotted here and there. Sr. Marie Joseph writes about this wonderful journey; "We do not speak at all; but we pray; we ask ourselves how man was bold enough to dare do such things and how he persevered to bring them to a successful end. We were in profound admiration at his genius which is certainly a spark of God the Creator's power".

Filled with noble thoughts, our travellers arrived in Kandy. The vehicles were there to receive them. Our Sisters attributed this thoughtful gesture to the affection or rather the veneration the people of this place had for Rev. Fr. Pullicani who as everyone else, had done much good in that Mission.

The little caravan got down at the house of the Benedictine Fathers who were pleased and thought themselves honoured that they had the Bishop and the religious as their guests. The first visit was to the good God to whom they owed a thousand thanks. Our Sisters did not have the time to visit the city; they saw a church which was beautiful for this country. It was richly decorated, the hangings (curtains) were of crimson velvet with golden fringes and separated the sanctuary, the side chapels from the nave. Since the feast of Christmas was drawing near, all the doors and the woodwork were painted afresh. In the afternoon they took the mail coach that would bring them to Matale. A Benedictine

Father wished to accompany our Bishop. Matale is sixteen miles from Kandy; during this trip, new and frightful sensations awaited our travellers. All the terror experienced on the rock of sensations was renewed and sometimes it was worse, as there was imminent danger here. We have heard our Sisters say that often it was very obvious that an invisible hand was protecting them in a very special manner.

You can imagine for yourself, my good Mother a narrow road, very steep, the slope of which was not smooth as it had many hair-pin bends. On one side was the mountain flank and on the other, the deep abyss. As far as one could see, there were more precipices which scared the travellers. It was the harvesting time for coffee and our sisters had to pass many carts and there was hardly space to pass. A little more on the side of the precipice was sufficient to disappear in the abyss. In addition to this risk was the imprudent coachman who let the horses go galloping down the descent. You will ask why our travellers did not get down in these dangerous crossings. Their idolatrous driver was afraid that the Christians would be scandalised. From time to time, the beauty of the country enchanted them and they forgot the dangers en route. However, this was short-lived. The evening set in, the last rays of the sun gilded the mountains, the woods and the rivers; a light breeze shook gently the leaves, everything in nature invited the soul to surrender itself to a sublime meditation of the grandeurs of God. Our Sisters, who were taken up with the charming scene that was before them let themselves be absorbed in meditation but they were jolted back into the surroundings suddenly which made them aware of a new danger; in a sharp bend, the vehicle came face to face with a chain of carts which would not budge. Everyone wondered whether he/she would arrive alive to the foot of the mountain. Here again, God protected His children... To avoid disaster, they had to climb on to another hill, the hills were in uninterrupted clouds; a third horse had to be tied with ropes in front of the other two, the ascent was made, which literally froze the missionaries in sheer

fright "We felt we would inevitably perish but the divine hand put off all dangers from us," they said.

The journey came to an end with the approach of the feast of St. Thomas. Monsignor's visit was unexpected but by a happy coincidence, all the bells began to peal at his arrival in Matale. While crossing the Town, our travellers met a lady, a Dutch descendant, who was converted to Christianity, as ardent and expressive of her faith as the Asians. She prostrated before Fr. Pullicani, kissed his feet and hands; Fr. Pullicani was her Pastor for a long time and she only spoke to him on knees and with great respect. Monsignor entrusted the Sisters to this excellent lady and you can easily guess with what joy she received them; they lacked nothing, for fortune surely matched her goodness.

The feast of St. Thomas - Our Sisters had the consolation of receiving Holy Communion. Our Lord should have loved to rest in the hearts of these generous persons, who, to make Him known, braved so many dangers and weariness. The moment of the visit of Jesus was indeed very precious to our poor Missionaries. It was a refreshing oasis where their souls quenched their thirst and drank with love the wine which helped virgins to sprout. During the day, a big number of curious on-lookers came close to them and overwhelmed them with questions. A Protestant lady appeared a lot moved, looking at the expression of goodness that radiated from them. At Matale they had to leave the mail-coach and get into inconvenient vehicles. There was a plan to stop the Bishop for the feast of Christmas and with this in mind, they pretended that all the carts were employed for the coffee harvest and that was to compel His Lordship to prolong his stay in Matale. Our good Bishop who was anxious to reach his destination took steps to leave without the knowledge of his good friends who sought to detain him. On the day and at the hour fixed, the carts arrived and the travellers set out soon and they were in Samboo, a little fertile village. Our Sisters had just a short time to rest; they had to save time. They came across buffaloes and elephants loaded with tobacco; respectfully they gave way to the travellers.

Thanks to the good roads, that part of the journey to Anuradhapura was made in a short time. They came there on the vigil of Christmas. The travellers stayed at the rest house; The Bishop had to say Mass the next day. At seven o'clock, in the midst of crackers, the sound of drums and the shouts of the crowd, he was conducted to the church. Sr. Marie Patrick, who was witnessing this reception to the Bishop for the first time could not contain her laughter especially when she saw the drummers dancing and gesticulating like mad men in front of the Bishop.

After Holy Mass, the Sisters had their meals at Philip's house, of whom you know already.

The musicians came again to express their joy and respect to Monsignor with all sorts of grimaces and antics (which were again signs that they venerated some one). Sr. Marie Patrick was a bit indignant, she could not understand how these human beings gifted with reason could act like madmen. I will not speak of the visit to the ruins which interested everyone. I will just mention that the Missionaries had come across numerous idols among the ruins. Everywhere, there were representations of elephant, the pig and crocodile.

At Anuradhapura the work of the good Sinhalese drivers came to an end; they had to take their vehicles and the small party agreed that they would not stop anywhere until late in the evening but the bulls refused to go further. After some hours of travelling, the caravan had to somehow stop. They were on the edge of a lake on which branches were thrown to help people to walk across especially those who were engaged in the postal service. The travellers left Matavatchy to go to Voulamkulam, when dark clouds built up over them and made them anxious; soon rain fell in torrents. The water of the jungle, the streams overflowed flooding the route and went into a lake that they had to cross. The bulls, not used to the yoke, lay down whenever the carts stopped and this happened often, for the drivers were obliged

to help one another to push the vehicles to hold them or to pull the wheels out of the grooves. Sometimes these poor men had to harness themselves with their bulls to stimulate them. They also had to foresee their whims in order to avoid accidents. Sr. Marie Joseph repeated constantly. "Do not let go". The route looked like a muddy marsh or a field, newly repaired, flooded with continual rain. Our travellers had to hold an umbrella open to keep off numerous rain spouts. Finally the carts reached a big lake where the water had mounted because of the rains and they feared that it could not be forded. Meanwhile, the drivers began to scream to excite the bulls and they got into the water. The current was so strong that the poor animals were frightened; they threw themselves once to the right and then to the left and they even refused to move. One can imagine the anxiety of our travellers during this terrible crossing; finally, thanks to the protection of the Holy Family they reached the other side without any accident.

They arrived at a rest house at nine o'clock at night. As soon as they stepped out of the cart, Monsignor always full of concern, for our Sisters, came to tell them that he regretted having brought them; but our Sisters were not discouraged and they easily calmed our Bishop.

The weather lasted four days; often they had to cross lakes. One night, it was impossible to go further as it was very dark and the drivers did not have any lantern, one had to keep holding a torch on one's hand. The roads were extremely bad. All of a sudden, the sound of a bell brought joy to them; the Sisters believed that they were near a Christian village and recited the Angelus. But, alas! it was only a Hindhu Temple.

Up to now the rest houses were clean enough for the travellers to rest; but soon the miserable and disgusting situation of these corners helped our Sisters to get an idea of the privations our Missionaries endured in their journeys, how much they suffered that they could not accommodate our good Bishop in a better place. It is rare that a large number of people find themselves

all together. At the same time in these small houses, there is no bed, the only furniture available is a chair or two and sometimes a couch. Our sisters desired to give this apartment to the Bishop, but all their efforts were of no avail. The Bishop himself decided that Sr. Marie Joseph would sleep in the cart and Sr. M. Patrick on the couch in the rest house. As soon as they entered the rest house, they were surrounded by a cloud of white ants, with wings and it was quite difficult to get rid of them.

The cart that brought provisions was getting late and all felt hungry. Sr. Marie Joseph who was in charge of the provisions for each day, at four o'clock, produced a bag of biscuits she had in reserve in case they had to wait long for the supplies. They decided to open this bag until they could have a substantial meal. The number of biscuits in the bag had been reduced, for they had spoken that these biscuits tasted good. What happened? The man who had the key to the provisions found that it was only just that the drivers and he himself should also eat them as well as their masters and had been taking the biscuits; after this discovery they had to ration twenty five biscuits per day per person; I suppose you know what this biscuit is? It is a little round bread, cooked four or five times over and which is reduced to a small thing after all the cooking. This little swindling of the man who was trusted shows you to what point one could trust the natives. The most honest person among them is not without a reproach in theft.

During this halt, one of the drivers fell ill. Our Sisters gave him a drink after which he felt a bit better; but feeling always sick he made use of a cart that was crossing - returned to Anuradhapura and without a word he disappeared.

On 31st, the little party arrived at a rest house. Sr. Marie Joseph seated in a broken chair, the only one that was there, wrote to us finally to reassure us. This dear Sister received a visit from a very disagreeable visitor - a tarantula; she left the place through fright. There was just the room and as always,

Monsignor gave this to the Sisters and he went to sleep in the cart. It was agreed that they would get up at 3 o'clock, so that our Bishop would celebrate Mass and all would leave immediately afterwards. Our travellers had just gone to rest when Sr.M.Patrick gave a big shout; she insisted that she had been touched by a harmful creature. Sr.M.Joseph thinking that it was a bat, tried to assure her but as Sr.Patrick was more and more agitated, they got up and killed a scorpion.

They had just got back to sleep when they heard a knock on their door; it was the Brother who was sick and wanted something. Happily, they had a little pharmacy but the medicine was infallible for a moment, later there were complaints. Sr.Marie Joseph had to stay near the sick Brother and render him service. Hence that was a sleepless night for our dear Sister. This was how she ended the old year and began the new one.

On the first day of the year, Monsignor offered the Holy Sacrifice in that poor room where the Sisters had slept. The table served as the altar. The misery of this corner that the good Master, in our eyes did not seem to occupy, recalled to our Sisters the humble home of Nazareth. Oh! how fervent were their prayers that were offered at the foot of this poor altar. A God in such humility for love of his creature. What a topic for trust for our Sisters! Our Divine Saviour had to accept their prayers (and wishes) expressed for their Superiors and their Sisters - at this precious moment, when He comes to make their hearts His living Tabernacle.

After Holy Mass they offered their New Year greetings to our good Bishop and to Rev.Fr. Pullicani.

Some days before our travellers passed a Christian village, the people came according to their custom and gave gifts to Monsignor; a little rice, eggs, bananas; many among them still had the medals the Sisters had given them four months back. Our Bishop was happy with their visit; he catechised them for a

long time, made them recite their prayers, which they had almost forgotten; on this day Fr. Pullicani baptised nine children and opened the gates of heaven to them.

When the moment came to leave, Fr. Pullicani did not return. A workman was sent to look for him. The carts were already beginning to move, Monsignor was impatient and went in search of him and found him in the thick jungle on a road he did not know. Finally, they were both with the Sisters in a short while.

The carts had hardly begun to move when the rain started again. The bulls were not docile at all after their rest. One morning, a driver came to tell the Bishop that one of the bulls had something strangely wrong with it; before they left, it was fine and without doubt someone had thrown a charm on it. He added that an eminent person like our Bishop could remedy this evil. Our Sisters implored the Bishop to bless their little caravan! Did His Lordship agree to their request? Or was it the Rosary recited by the five year old child that touched Mary's heart? Whatever it was, the charm disappeared and the bull was well again.

The first day of the Year was excellent; all the clouds had disappeared. The road was bordered with grass studded with flowers of a thousand shades of colour which sparkled in the sun, like precious pearls. This charming scenery made them forget the weariness of the preceding days. The travellers reached Elephant Pass (Paw) which if you remember is a truly big part of the sea which the Sisters had to cross in their first journey. Before the tide came, the travellers embarked in little boats made of hollowed wood. They were narrow so that only two could get into them. While waiting for their baggage which always followed them, our Missionaries had time to visit the rest house situated on the other side of the sea. It was more convenient than the other places they had visited so far. It was an upstairs building and was freshly painted; unfortunately the caravan had to come across (the sea).

After three quarters of an hour, with great effort the carts came to the shore. Without delay the caravan left in order to arrive at Pallai before night-fall. The rest house there was rather large and all could lodge there.

Towards three o'clock in the morning, the echoes of the cries - "Let us leave ! let us leave !" were heard the drivers did not respond to the call soon our travellers learnt that these men had gone to look for their bulls that had disappeared. However, their anxiety did not last long. The two animals were seen ruminating in the midst of a thick and fertile field, grazing peacefully on the green and tender herbs that had attracted them.

The journey was coming to its end. A little before coming to the last stop (Poulavala) our Missionaries were greatly surprised to see a group of Christians bearing a cross and banners coming to meet the Bishop. As soon as they saw the first cart, which was the Sisters', all of them fell prostrate on the ground. You can judge how embarrassed your daughters were, my good Mother! In vain they called the driver of the Monsignor to go before them; they were obliged to receive the honours which they knew were not for them.

As they neared the village, the Sisters were soon surrounded by a number of women who came out of curiosity to look at them. A caress to their children was enough to fill them with joy. Among them were many of our orphans, now married, who were all proud and happy to see again the Sisters who had brought them up; they showed them their little ones; they believed that they were entitled to approach them very closely and not to leave them and even obliged the others to distance themselves. This proof of gratitude on the part of these young women, pleased our travellers; they understood that the natives are sensitive to recall the good done to them and to bear witness to their gratitude on the right occasion.

I will not try to describe the expression of joy and respect which the good Christians lavished on their Bishop; one recalled easily the receptions given to the great Apostle of India at one time. But how did these good uncivilised people come to know that Monsignor had to go through their area? The previous evening, a Priest who was some miles away had some how come to know that our Bishop was approaching. Immediately he got the poor natives to prepare a suitable reception for him. Everything was perfectly done; an address was read to the Bishop in which all the Christians pleaded to give them a Priest, for they had a visit from a Priest just once a year and many among them were dying without Baptism and the sacraments. Also the labourers are not enough for the abundant harvest in our regions and inspite of the great desire our Bishop had to justify this request, he had to restrict himself to giving some hope to these good natives.

At one o'clock they left Poulavala. All the Christians accompanied His Lordship with drums up to a certain distance. Finally, the Bishop blessed these brave people and they returned to their homes filled with joy and happiness.

Our travellers came at last to Chavakachcheri, 10 miles from Jaffna. Cars awaited them; willingly they left their clumsy carts. All hearts began to beat very hard. I assure you, my good Mother, that a faithful echo responded to them from Jaffna. Who among us, was not eager to have the Bishop who has been absent for so many months!... and to see the end of a long and painful journey for our loved ones!

Our Mother did not hold herself any longer, she wanted to fly, to go and meet our dear travellers. Thanks to the amiability of an excellent family, a vehicle was put at her disposal; and taking with her a few of her daughters, she left at three o'clock inspite of the rain that threatened to come down. Almost at the same time and in the same place many other vehicles joined us. Each one desired to be the first to enjoy the presence of our Missionaries.

One of our past students told us to go ahead instead of staying out. Our Mother accepted her suggestion. Ah! she too had daughters whom she wanted to see again! From time to time, we got down from the vehicle to admire the country-side and to pluck the flowers that bordered the route... At last, a dull sound first, and then little by little more distinct was heard; we spotted the top of a vehicle in the distance. We did not have any doubt that these are the ones we have been waiting for, for more than three hours! How do we express to you the joy of our Mother, our joy and that of our Sisters whom we had seen from a distance? Sr. Marie Joseph did not wait for the horse to stop so that she could throw herself into the arms of Mother Xavier. We ran towards the vehicle of Monsignor. Oh! He was happy to return to his flock; with what paternal tenderness he addressed a word to each one of us! Meanwhile, my good Mother, in our joy we did not forget the others who were longing for the happy moment that we enjoyed; we hurried on and soon every one was happy. Before going to the Church, Monsignor had to receive the felicitations for his safe return which were addressed to him in a hall improvised for the occasion. How touching it was to see the Fathers, the Brothers, the children in a word, all one people, crowd around their venerated Pastor and witness to him the joy which filled their hearts on his return. Monsignor made himself all to all, he gave a word of affection, a fatherly encouragement to each one.

A long discourse was read to His lordship who willingly replied to it with pious and affectionate words. After the blessing by the Bishop, the crowd went towards the Church where this beautiful day ended with the solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. What acts of thanksgiving have we not rendered to our good Master who had deigned to protect our dear travellers so visibly.

Monsignor also will have a large share of our gratitude; We cannot forget his tender solicitude for our Sisters.

24 April 1871.

I have already told you briefly about the embarrassment in which we find ourselves in order to maintain our Orphans. Our good Bishop did not want to send away the Orphans who had received Baptism, so he not only appealed to the generosity of the Christians in his Vicariate, but imposed that all our Missionaries accept many privations in order to provide for the needs of these poor children. Some days back the vehicle of Monsignor was raffled for the benefit of our orphan boys and girls. Needless to say, my good Mother, that on our side we are doing everything possible to keep in addition to our baptised Orphans, our little pagans who are asking insistently for the grace to become Catholics. Up to now, thanks to the special protection of Divine Providence and of St. Joseph, we have been able to provide for the needs of our dear children. Therefore I am more and more convinced that God has hidden treasures for the poor who depend on Him and my confidence in His help has increased each day.

Our young workers of the workshop of St. Joseph, when they heard that I had to, perhaps, send away our children, came to ask me permission to take charge of one of them. "My dear children, your heart is far larger than your means! But, you have nothing for yourselves, how can you maintain a child?" I told them. "Do not be afraid, mother", they said. "Permit us only to work during our recreations to pay the board for our protégée. Then with our old clothes we will clothe her; if you wish, we will give her our dinner while we content ourselves with three hoppers for our meal". As I was warmly touched by the generous sympathy of our dear children, I agreed to all that they wanted, except to their deprivation of a part of their meal. They got to work immediately. Their first concern was to win over to their cause, two good ladies from whom they were sure of getting work. A few days later, I went to present to my young girls their child of adoption and little Victoria (this is what she wanted to be called) received clothes that were clean and neatly arranged. Her board for one month was fully paid. In short, our dear workers are full of zeal to

continue their good work which certainly will draw down God's blessing on them.

After the publication of the pastoral letter of the Bishop written in favour of the Orphanages of Jaffna, one day, three fishermen stopped one of our orphans who accompanied our woman to the market, and told them that they have the intention of giving hoppers to pray to God so that they would have abundant catch. Our little Beatrice returned all happy to give me this agreeable news; since that time, this dear child Beatrice like Eudoxie of old, became the provider of the poor Orphans of the poor Holy Family in Jaffna. Each day she goes to the market and brings the necessary fish for our dear Family.

The Chief Medical Officer having heard about the state of embarrassment in which the misfortunes of France had thrown us, came to an agreement with our Family Doctor to give free service to our Institution. When they came to offer me their services, these gentlemen told me that I should not hesitate to disturb them, for night and day they would be at our disposal. Since then, not only did they give their help, even more, they supplied us with medicine without demanding from us the little payment. One was a Protestant and the other was a Hindu. May God reward them by opening their eyes to the true faith. This is our whole-hearted prayer. You see, my good mother, that Divine Providence never abandons us, your poor daughters. I would not delay to mention all the tender care of Divine Providence over us. I have strong faith we could keep our children, that St. Joseph our beloved Protector will give us the wherewith to nourish them until more happy days will permit the beautiful work of the Holy Childhood to take up anew its good benefits in our dear Island of Ceylon.

The Devil, envious of the good we do, does not stop placing traps for us. Seeing that he cannot succeed in preventing us from saving souls from his grip, he seeks to take revenge in another way. Our natives get excited easily. There was great

preoccupation among them about hunger which threatened to affect them. For many weeks their imagination went riot and finally, seven among them succumbed to the temptation; they escaped to their homes. One of these poor children was brought back to us but we feared that the others would return to paganism. Two little girls did not wish to go back with their sisters. We hope these would help to bring back those who had escaped, for we had told the parents that they would not see their children who were with us, until they produced the other children. You will understand, won't you, our disappointment, my good Mother? ... We also hope that you will help us with your fervent prayers in this very difficult period that we are going through.

On 8 February we have celebrated the sorrowful anniversary of the death of our beloved good Father.

On the vigil of the month of St. Joseph we found at the foot of the statue of our great Saint many packets of candles and a big wax candle with 4 or 5 francs. We did not know from where this offering came. Later we learnt that a young girl from the workshop filled with zeal for the glory of the holy Protector of our works had made a little collection in order to adorn his altar. Our children love St. Joseph very much for whom they have a very special devotion; his month was celebrated with a lot of piety. We had a Novena for the feast of our Father General to pray for his intention. On the 19th, a Sunday, we celebrated the feast of St. Joseph as well as we could. The following day was the turn to pray for our Father General. The Bishop wanted to make the feast a solemn one, said Holy Mass in our Chapel and gave Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the evening.

On 5 April we assembled again to offer our prayers for our revered Pro Director. Although we did not have the privilege of knowing him, we have been able to appreciate his paternal kindness; the letters he sometimes addresses to us, to this distant Island, speak to us well of this interest and zeal the good

Priest has for our works, assure us that he does not forget his daughters, even those who are so far away. We can only express our gratitude by our prayers for him and we have done this whole heartedly; on the day of the feast of St. Vincent, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered for his intention.

This year we have to thank God for a new grace; our good Bishop wished to celebrate the Holy Week services in our Chapel; thus we have experienced a consolation as never before, as we had never dared to hope for such a favour.

From the time we heard of the intentions of Monsignor, we put ourselves out to prepare an altar of repose for our Lord Jesus. Our community room became a workshop of flowers where everyone, even, our native Sisters, were well occupied. On Holy Tuesday at the night recreation, while we were engaged in our work whole heartedly, our dear Sr. M. Stephen got a sudden attack of vomiting so terrible that she threw out blood. She was nearly at death's door. I hurried to send for the Priest and the Doctor. The latter told me that our poor Sister's condition was not assuring at all and the suffocation she was going through made him fear that she would not hold out until the next day. When the Doctor had gone, Sr. Stephen made her Confession and received Extreme Unction but she could not communicate despite her great desire to do so. Rev. Fr. Pullicani prepared her for her final journey so well that our dear sick Sister was so happy to leave this world.

She was quite bad that night and the following day to her disappointment, she felt better. She also reproached us that we had taken too much care of her and thus we had delayed her going home. Certainly we did not think like her ! We were very happy that she was still with us and that she would continue her apostolate of suffering, which, while increasing her own merits was a blessing for our works; a sick person in a house - does she not draw down God's blessing on us all? On Holy Wednesday, our dear Sister experienced some relief and we could continue our work on the altar of repose, which we completed late

that evening. On Holy Thursday we had a solemn Mass in our Chapel; our choir although there were only a few members, sang very well, to the satisfaction of our Chaplain, who fancied himself in a Cathedral. Next we accompanied the good God to his new dwelling place, which was fairly delightful in its freshness. While like the Holy Women we followed our Divine Saviour on his road to Calvary, the Government Agent gave a rich dinner followed by a ball to which were invited all the notable personalities of the town. This man shows himself a fervent Protestant but alas! this is how all these fanatic disciples of Jesus celebrate the passion and death of their Redeemer. How much we pity these poor blind people while we pray that God should enlighten them, we thank Him for making the flame of true faith shine before our eyes.

Death came and snatched away one of our children of the Holy Childhood. Ambrosia was sixteen, had good health, an agreeable appearance and a charming character. Her parents were proud of her and had planned to get her married to a pagan. Quietly, they made all the necessary preparations. Man proposes but God disposes; this dear child felt tired during the first two days of the Holy Week, I got her to see the Doctor who did not find anything seriously wrong with her. On Tuesday night, Sr.M.Michael came to tell me that Ambrosia wanted to see her Confessor and that she was going to die. The next morning, I informed our Chaplain who quickly came to see her immediately after Mass; she made her confession. The Doctor who was called for the second time, said that she had tetanus. We hurried to give her the Viaticum, also the Extreme Unction which she received with great piety. We did not have much pain to let her make the sacrifice of her life!..... "I wish very much to die" she said. "Since it is the will of the good God!"..... During her sickness, all the time she bore up her sufferings with admirable resignation. Her brother who is an orphan of St.Joseph came to see her; "Do not cry" she told him, "I am going to heaven", she added "Tell my father and my mother that my last wish is that they become Catholics, for this is the only way for them to meet me again one day". She desired to make her will; to her brother, she left her Rosary

and her Scapular; she expressed that half of her necklace be given to her mother and the other half to be sold, so that with that money a Holy Mass should be offered for the repose of her soul. In her fear of a long Purgatory, she gave to many of her companions, some money she owed them. On Saturday she told a postulant who was beside her; "I will die today." She replied that she doubted that very much. "Well", said our sick child, "I want you to promise me that if what I say is right, you will recite a rosary for my intention." In the morning she again made her confession and received the plenary indulgences. At eleven o' clock, she gave a feeble cry and breathed her last. Undoubtedly God had a merciful plan for this child in calling her to Him at the moment when it seemed that hell was to be let loose against her to destroy her faith. This death so peaceful and edifying had made a strong impression on our children. During the time when our dear departed child's body was lying exposed, we allowed our students to pray near her remains; they all returned very much consoled; our dear Ambrosia's face was so calm and tranquil that she looked as if she was sleeping on her funeral couch, her lips parted in a light smile; this was the conviction of our children and to prove that she was really dead, one burnt the sole of her feet.

The death of this dear child, while it caused us much grief, gave us many sweet consolations It is another angel in heaven, a rose bud that has gone to bloom in the gardens of our Saviour; we are assured that she will not cease to pray for the family that had adopted her.

Our Sisters of St. Peter have just made their annual retreat. All our students who spoke Tamil were allowed to participate in it. They had three instructions daily, but the third one was only for the religious and the postulant. The Bishop himself wanted to close these days of recollection and prayer. After Holy Mass he confirmed seven of our students and an old lady who had been baptised the previous year. Since the latter had given up idolatry, her children treated her very badly, so we keep her with us throughout the day. Sr. St. Peter, the porter, has taken charge of her. She

has given her a place at the entrance, looks after her health and gives her food, for the poor woman was dying of hunger. That evening before the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, a number of the retreatants were admitted to the confraternity of the blue scapular.

In a short while we are going to have the visit of the Inspectors and at this moment we are preparing our children for their examinations. The English Inspector is a new comer and we have not met him as yet. He is a Protestant and in general these gentlemen are not favourable towards Catholic Schools. We do not have much confidence in them, but our trust is in God and in the protection of Mary, our good Mother.

We are just reading the Annals of the Family which our Sisters in Kurunegala have sent us. Oh! How edified all are about the good our Sisters are doing! We cannot rejoice enough about being part of a Family that God protects so visibly.

20 July 1871.

Our Mother is a bit tired these days; hence she asks me to give you the edifying details she has collected during the course of this term.

You know, my good Mother, I am always happy when I am permitted to speak to you at length of this dear family in Jaffna which you love much and which I assure you will not cede to anyone the place it occupies in your maternal affection.

The children of St. Joseph are always good and pious even though they are poor and their days are taken up with hard work; they occasionally give touching proof of their disinterestedness and generosity. On the feast of St. Joseph, the sacristan found at the foot of the statue of the great Saint a packet on which was

written these words, "A little present offered to our glorious Patron". The parcel contained a very beautiful shawl in embroidered muslin which these poor children had made secretly during their recreation. From their little savings they had bought the material and the other embroidery. They then worked hard in the course of which they deprived themselves of many things. I often witnessed their anxiety when their surprise increased or they feared that they would not finish their work on time. As soon as they finished their meals and the workshop was still closed, they rushed to get their favourite work done. How many times; I myself felt really touched by their gratitude towards their Patron Saint and the eagerness with which they searched to give pleasure to their mistress! St. Joseph cannot but protect them in return for their child-like trust in him.

This year, thanks to the altar that our Mother had put up in honour of Mary at the back of the garden, the month of May was full of charm for us. If the strong rays of the burning sun did not allow us to decorate the little sanctuary with natural flowers, it was not any less beautiful because nature is generously full of fresh decorations; the climbing plants, fresh with the recent showers covered the grotto and its branches were trained to cover the interior of the shrine like a tapestry.

The statue of our heavenly Mother was placed on a rock that was out and on it were arranged shells of all sorts mixed with flowers. She appeared gracious and beautiful. In the garden in front was a cluster of lilies which bloom only during this beautiful month, giving out sweet perfume which the evening breeze wafts along with the hymns of love and prayers to our Mother Mary. In the late evening, when the sun disappears majestically behind the purple and golden clouds, the Chapel echoes with chords of music from the organ; we intone the litany of the Blessed Virgin; the children, the sisters arrange themselves along the alleys in the garden. While going in procession, we sing the hymns, the orphans pray in a loud voice. We sometimes pause in between

and the little birds take up these songs - an invocation of praise to the Queen of Heaven.

We then come to the pious sanctuary; the children gracefully move in two lines and from a crown in front of the grotto. After the prayer and while each pupil places at our Lady's feet a flower with an intention we sing some pious hymns; the procession moves again as the Litany continues to be recited until we reach the Chapel. Our dear Mother then prays the 'Memorare' for all the needs of our works and then a canticle either in English or in French ends this pious exercise each evening.

On the last day, the children who during the entire month, had been offering to the Blessed Virgin a pledge of their good behaviour, recite the act of consecration and instead of a flower, they pin to the rocks of the grotto a crown of everlasting flowers, a sign which will last they say as an emblem of their love for Mary.

Since I am talking about the grotto, I must also tell you about how, on 12 June, after the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament we celebrated the feast of our Lady of All Graces and at this little sanctuary. This place reminds us, only a little though by its name and form, the holy sanctuary where a Sister of the Holy Family never prays in vain!

The grotto was strewn with flowers; the organ was brought to the place; when night began to throw its dark shadows on the earth, as on the beautiful days of the month of May, your little family came in procession singing the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. The rock was all lit with lights; the hollows in the rock were filled with flowers. It was absolutely like a shower of sparks in the midst of which the statue of Mary Immaculate stood out. Her cloak and her extended arms cast a shadow and she seemed to invite us to place ourselves under her powerful protection. Our hearts were touched and we felt strongly how much we loved our sweet Patron; we sang with all our hearts our most beautiful canticle.... Oh, how happy we were !

Our Mother then prayed for our dear Family in a loud voice, for our much loved Superiors, for all our works, for our poor France! Then, as everything passes away even our purest joys, we retire, our hearts filled with pleasant impressions of that evening. The illuminations remained long after the ceremony. Many of our children who could not resist admiring Mary came back to the feet of the venerated statue!.....

You know, my good Mother, that the misfortunes of France do not enrich your daughters in Jaffna. Following the example of our Foundresses who despite their distress never refused to take the orphans brought to them, Mother Xavier, with full confidence in Divine Providence welcomed a poor old beggar woman who had not any food or shelter and about whom we will talk a little later. The little pagans numbering fifteen were not sent away even though the fees of the children of the Holy Childhood were very much reduced, inspite of the collection made in the Vicariate and which was far above what we expected. God loves those who trust in Him. Did He not say, "Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself; sufficient for the day is the evil there of?". And again He said, "Your Father in Heaven knows that you have need of these". We have proof of this each day, my good Mother, for with all these responsibilities and with such little resources, everything goes well as in ordinary times.

You have already known that in the early days when we were short of money, some little children went against us and many of them were rescued. God draws good out of evil, sometimes! One of them, a Catholic who had tried her best to take away her little sister who was still a pagan, without success, returned some time later but without the least sign of repentance. Her companions did all that was in their power to inspire her with proper sentiments, but she would not listen. The Sister then brought her to our Mother who first tried to coax her gently but without success. Then Mother Xavier, to impress upon her powerfully "made herself terrible" (This is the only way to impress

upon the natives). "Don't you know that by returning to your home (her parents were pagans) you are walking on the way to hell?" "What is that to me?" I wish to go there." "Unfortunate child, you are ignorant of what hell is. Do you want to lose your soul?" "That is alright - I wish to go there." Then our Mother shook her with force and pretended to be frightened; "Truly, I believe that the Devil had taken possession of you already and it is he who speaks through your mouth! Quick, bring holy water to throw on this child to drive away the Demon". The little rebel who had never seen our Mother in such a severe form began to tremble and to scream like a really possessed person. The scapular that she wore was snatched away! "This will burn you, since you wish to go to hell, you are not worthy to wear the livery of the Blessed Virgin; take care of yourself" During this strange encounter, the orphans prayed. Perhaps because of the fear that she had of all that she had heard, or more perhaps because of the efficacy of prayer that evening itself, the poor child went to find her mistress, asked pardon and confessed her fault. She told frankly that she had only come to take her little sister. Since then, she receives communion and we have nothing to complain about her conduct. Her sister too is good as well as interesting. For the rest, my good Mother, our little pagans are at the moment, our sweet consolation by their wisdom. Aren't we allowed to see a proof that the sacrifice made in favour of these dear children, is very pleasing to the heart of Jesus? Oh! how touched you will be if you will see these poor children on meeting our Mother, throw themselves at her feet and request her the grace of Baptism! The little girl I spoke of is one of those who keeps asking to become a Catholic; but prudence demands that we wait for some time.

Death has again visited us this term; we have had the sorrow of losing our much regretted Sr. Stephen, whose memory is always with us! Oh, we love to think that the numerous sacrifices offered daily for the repose of her soul have already put her in possession of her God towards whom she has flown with an absolute filial confidence. At the death of our dear Sister, we were touched by the generosity and the goodness of some women

who for the most part, had not even seen her. They had made a little collection and had brought to us an offering for seven masses which were said for her intentions.

Some days after this sad separation, one of our orphan children who was hydrophobia but was somewhat improving fell unconscious all of a sudden. We hastened to call the Priest for we were not without anxiety about the state of her soul. A few minutes later, which seemed ages, we prayed to Mary asking for the recovery of this child so that she would receive her last sacraments. The Priest arrived; he approached the sick child, spoke to her but there was no sign from her.

All of a sudden she opened her large eyes and began to cry. You can guess, my good Mother, how happy we were and how we thanked the Blessed Virgin. The Priest took advantage of her lucid moments, to help her to make a good confession; and to give her Extreme Unction. He promised that if she was able, he would give her first communion. The day was full - she had moments of crisis and moments of clarity, but alas! at 9 o'clock at night she breathed her last!...

During this time, the poor old woman about whom I promised to speak to you, my good Mother, was very ill of asthma; she was brought to the convent as she said she wanted to die in this house, where she had learnt to know about God and had received Baptism. Our Mother took a lot of interest in her and made a little room with mats in the garden. The good woman asked to confess and to communicate. She then said "what God wills will happen". The Priest fulfilled her desires. A little altar was put up in the open, near her hut, and we accompanied our Divine Master. I need not tell you, my good Mother, what went on in our hearts on seeing God's love for this soul! The Priest was obliged to go on his knees to give communion to the poor dying woman and she was overflowing with joy; at the same time, he administered the last sacraments. How beautiful is a Priest beside the bed of a

dying person! But what strikes me most and what resembles most the Divine Model is the sight of the Priest as he makes himself small to come to the poor soul, to crouch in the dust to bend so low towards the sick person, to be able to hear her and to speak to her the works of peace and pardon!....

Our good old woman is still living and she is a source of blessings for our works. As she is asthmatic she does not sleep or sleeps very little; she passes her nights and days in prayer. She does not know how to pray mentally or softly; the whole world can hear what she says to the good God. Sometimes she is sublime in her aspirations for heaven, in her reflections which show that without doubt she meditates. The mercy of God, the Passion and sometimes the Last Supper are for her inexhaustible subjects. She turns towards the Chapel and with her hands and eyes raised upwards, we hear her cry: "Do not weep over me, daughters of Israel, but weep for yourselves! Yes, it is good for me that I should cry, miserable sinner, I have offended the Lord so many times..... He has done only good to me; for how did I come here, to this holy house? I had two children who both died of cholera; they were baptised; over there, they have prayed for me and God brought me here, me, who have committed so many sins".

On another occasion the subject of her prayer is on the Last Supper. It appears that she tells other persons what she sees. "Look! Jesus takes the bread. He gives a piece to each one of the twelve; the twelve eat and are satisfied. Then I also, I too receive it from them". She gives the name of the bread, she goes on to say the prayer of the Sunday; "Every day we tell Him give us this day our daily bread and yes. He gives it first to our Mother who distributes it to us. How does He do this? When I go to the house of the rich requesting something as charity, for example, a piece of cloth to cover myself, they often tell me; "Go away, we have nothing to give you". Here is a house of the poor, there is no one except the poor here and besides they have already given me three cardigans and rice always. Oh! It is God

who gives here!". When she received her last Sacraments she said: "Now I do not commit any more faults, so that my soul will go to the good God all white. I do not want to go to Purgatory". However, she replied, "You love to feel a bit the fire when it is cold. It is true, but it is because this fire is useful for my body. Oh Lord! let me suffer in this life as long as you wish, as I cannot endure the fire of Purgatory". She learnt that our Mother was suffering a little; many times during the day she has to be given the news about her and she would then say: "My God if you heal her in gratitude I will not quit your side!" I will not finish, my good Mother, if I go on repeating all the edifying things this good old woman says: Who, then, had taught her to pray so well? She does not know how to read or to write; with difficulty she could retain just what is absolutely necessary for her baptism. and meanwhile how many souls would wish to meditate like her!

The drawing of the little lottery in favour of the Propagation of the Faith and the Holy Childhood brought us this year about 200 francs, inspite of the great difficulty we had to distribute the tickets. One of our externs, a good and charming child, although Protestant, took charge of 70 tickets which she took to give her contacts; she is the one who gave us the beautiful gifts. She had got over and above from the children of St. Joseph the work they had done during their recreations for the maintenance of their protegee.

Our Sisters of Kurunegala had desired to take a list that one of our past pupils now in their hostel had given in a grand party in the town. The children had got for themselves the numbers that were left.

Since his return from Europe, Monsignor is busy organising the Catechism courses. In order to stimulate the zeal and the good will of the children the groups were formed. Rev.Fr.Curate was put in charge especially of the young girls who were the most advanced; those who are less advanced and those who do not know their prayers are entrusted to our native Sisters

who act as Catechists every Sunday in the Church; they hold their classes on the verandha adjoining the Church.

Since I am on the topic of our Sisters of St. Peter, I ought to tell you something about the departure of Sr. Marie Angela to Kurunegala. This dear Sister, who has left very good souvenirs in our midst, was one of the foundresses of our indigenous Novitiate. Her name suits her well; modest, pious, lovable, simple, always charitable and good, she was loved by her Sisters and the children who were able to appreciate her virtues. She is full of gratitude and love for our Mother and she made a big sacrifice to leave her; we all regretted very much her departure for we found in her many edifying qualities.

When the time of separation came, the Novices burst into tears and we too wept. When she came to embrace our Mother for the last time sobbing, she cried; "Oh! it is only for God, I make this sacrifice". She is such a dear Sister! We pray to God to safeguard her, in her long journey; a good part of which she will have to make alone! When she left Jaffna, she was in the company of two women and their children. Our Mother saw her going away with regret; she desired to wait for a more favourable occasion but here such instances are rare and she had to leave.

In the course of the last term, we had the consolation of presenting a young pagan girl for baptism; she was in our Orphanage for a year. She was returned to her family.

Our Fathers invited us, some days back to celebrate with them the twenty fifth anniversary of the priesthood of Rev. Fr. Pullicani. Our modest but pious songs sung whole heartedly made suitable, as far as possible, to the circumstance, gave some solemnity to the Mass and to the felicitations that followed. We then went to the parlour where a little throne was arranged. A painting of the Blessed Virgin contemplating the sleeping Infant Jesus was placed on the upper part while graceful garlands made of natural flowers formed a tapestry on the walls. The garlands

were held in place on either side by a bunch of green foliage. Fathers, Brothers, Sisters, Orphan Girls and Boys were all united to celebrate this happy day. There was joy written on all the faces, which showed the sentiments of respect, affection and veneration that each one desired to express to this good and devoted Priest. Rev. Fr. Salaun delivered a speech, full of feeling and appreciation. He sketched the principal qualities of the life of a good Priest, the glory it procures for God, the good it does to souls. Here are the main points of this discourse; "The life of a good Priest can be compared to a river that descends from the mountains and spreads out on the plain; it fertilises and makes fruitful the vegetation, the flowers of every sort to bloom, exhale everywhere the sweet perfume. This river, my reverend Father, has already flowed a quarter century for you. May it flow, may it flow twice, three times as much... etc."

Fr. Pullicani replied in a few words to the different praises which he merited so well; then one of the young seminarians, these chosen plants which he as a gardener and a Father had tended, read a compliment in Tamil; a Brother of St. Joseph followed him with a speech read in Sinhalese, while the Orphans impatient, I think, waiting for their turn got (themselves) ready, six in a row, arranging themselves in a semi-circle in front of the Priest; the one in the middle recited a third compliment, while his little companions offered different gifts; one held beautiful pine apples; two others had pigeons and the fourth a bouquet, according to the custom of the country arranged in a special way and of all colours; to complete the tableau a big boy came bearing a huge fruit which they call "Jak" - its form and size can be compared to our biggest melons but with exterior similar to a fir-cone. There was a general hilarity at the sight of this present and especially of the boy who bore it as he looked embarrassed about himself. The compliment was short... The pigeons were set free, the jak respectfully placed in front of good Fr. Pullicani. We left the place bearing in our hearts the sweet impressions of this family feast.

30 October 1871

My good Mother,

On July 26 our Ladies of Charity celebrated the feast of St. Anne, their Patronness, in our Chapel.

This year, the month of July had been fruitful in graces for our students; twenty among them had the joy of approaching for the first time the Holy Table and of receiving on the same day the Sacrament of Confirmation. These beautiful ceremonies took place in the Parish, and if we had regrets that our dear students did not have the atmosphere to be recollected they would have found it in our Chapel, we were also happy to note that their modesty and their good behaviour, distinguished them from the rest of the other first communicants.

On Assumption Day, we have offered to the Blessed Virgin and for your intention, my good Mother, a bouquet worthy of her Immaculate heart; six little neophytes purified in the waters of Baptism. We were all the more filled with joy for these dear children, since eight months earlier it was decided that we should send them away because of bad times. It was just a measure of prudence. Our little girls who knew what awaited them (in their homes) begged us not to abandon them. They did not want to return to the Devil, they said. In our distress, we prayed to St. Joseph. We begged of him the rice for each day for our poor Orphans; we promised this good Father that we would raise a sanctuary to him in our garden where each evening we would joyfully go to pray to him. Our Holy Protector heard our promises and we were abundantly blessed which helped us to continue this work of God.

There are seven more little catechumens who desire with great fervour the Sacrament of Baptism and want it. This grace, I hope will be given to them soon. What a lot of good we can do here, my good Mother. If we have a vast local resource it will not

be difficult to pull out a large number of souls from paganism. It is true that the fold of Satan is well populated but how many are there because of their ignorance!

The feast of the Assumption being the patronal feast of the Cathedral we had to celebrate it solemnly with the faithful. It was for us a little sacrifice, for we would have been more happy to keep in the family the feast of our August Mother of Heaven and of her who replaces her here below. Monsignor, understood our legitimate regret and he wanted to compensate for it the following day. On 16th morning we had to go to the Cathedral to assist at an Ordination of two Deacons. But at 3 o'clock in the evening our good Bishop came to our house accompanied by five Priests and three Deacons. Our Chapel was most beautifully decorated and in addition we had the rich ornaments from the Cathedral sent by the Monsignor himself. The Vespers were very solemn, the hymn of the Benediction sung by our choir alone was perfectly rendered. We never had such a beautiful ceremony in our modest Chapel. We went soon after to the grotto of Our Lady of All Graces which was illuminated by our children. We sang the Canticle "Oh! Good Mother of Missionaries", the spirit and the fervour with which the Fathers and the Sisters sang this hymn told how much they loved Mary and the filial affection with which they looked upon her as their true support and their unique hope in this foreign land. The next morning the Bishop returned to say Mass for your intention; our hearts were satisfied and we thanked God for all the consolations which He had given us.

We have just got one of our Orphans married. Her mother knowing well that it was useless to propose a non-Catholic decided on a Catholic young man who was earlier in the Orphanage of St. Joseph. The good dispositions which the girl had, greatly compensated the anxiety we had, to do good to her. She did not give her consent until she was assured of the piety of her future spouse. She insisted that he should approach the Holy Table many times before their marriage. On that day the two of them received Holy Communion.

On the 19th, Monsignor celebrated Mass for all the benefactors of the work in the Cathedral; we assisted at it with our children; the Orphans love much to pray for the Dead. Some days back the Rev. Fr. Curate sent to our Orphanage some crucifixes and candle sticks of this Church to be cleaned, promising to pay them generously for this little work. I received 5 francs for our dear little ones, which I sent to them almost immediately. It was a considerable sum to them and they got together to know how they should use this money; unanimously they decided that they would use the sum to get Masses said for the souls in Purgatory.

We have just lost our poor old Marie. Until her last moments she did not cease to edify us by her piety, her resignation, her patience. After receiving the last Sacraments she only spoke of going to Heaven; seeing God, and the Virgin Mary towards whom she had a tender devotion. She said, "The first thing I will do when I arrive in heaven will be to pray for these good ladies who received me." Three or four days before her death she told the persons who were around her, "I am giving you trouble, but it will all be over soon; Saturday" she added. In her delirium she repeated several times: "Saturday", and in fact she died on that day. Our Sister porter, was very devoted to old Marie; the poor sick woman had told her often "I will be coming to see you". We know through a good woman who knew Marie from her young days that even as a pagan she loved much the poor and gave them voluntarily. God has given her a hundred fold, in this life for the little good that she had been able to do. I do not doubt that at this moment she rejoices in His presence and is another Protectress for us in heaven.

Our Sisters who look after the parlour do some propaganda on religion in their conversations with the working girls of our English students, for they are only Catholics in name. These poor people employed constantly by their Protestant mistresses forget their religious obligations and do not even know their prayers. Our Sisters thus have the consolation of doing them some good. In Jaffna there are a great number of Christians who

are very ignorant because they do not take the trouble to be instructed. The Rev.Fr. Curate sends us sometimes to catechise the young girls who do not know their religion any more than the pagans.

You see, my good Mother, what a vast field we have to cultivate; pray with us, so that God will make it grow and produce an abundant harvest.

Kurunegala, 17 December 1870

My Very Good Mother,

I regret much that my greetings will not reach you for 1st January. But my heart will take less time to cross the distance which separates us than the ship to bring this letter to you. I shall certainly be very close to you on this day. May the Divine Master hear my prayers and grant all that you ask for, for you and your large Family.

Here I am in my new Mission for the past fifteen days. I can only rejoice at the gracious welcome given to me by the Sisters and the children. Monsignor left us two days ago and took with him Sr.Marie Joseph and Sr.Mary Patrick. We can never adequately bear witness to our good Bishop, for all the gratitude that his goodness inspires in us. During the journey and his stay in Kurunegala, he was full of fatherly attention towards us. Our house being too small he wanted very much to find another one for us but this was an impossible task. Then it was decided that after doing some repairs, we will remain where we are.

Our children are of the black race; nevertheless, they have a very pretty figure which struck me a lot. Twice I have visited the classes already. Truly, my good Mother, obedience works wonders; I feared that I would find myself disconcerted and it seems that exteriorly I have the appearance that I have not done any-

Rev. Prof. G. Pileendran
Professor Pileendran

thing else but have looked after the children only. Our students are not numerous! We have twenty two in the English class and ten or twelve in the Sinhalese class. Among the latter there is a little Buddhist; the others are Catholics. Many of the English girls are Protestants. We have to struggle a lot. The Protestant Bishop during his visit to Kurunegala showed that he was hostile to our work. It is certain, my good Mother, that good cannot be done without suffering, but can we be afraid when God is on our side! On the other hand the little Protestants who are with us are quite happy; their parents themselves are happy to entrust them to us, which makes us hope that after the combat comes the victory; that with the help from on high we will weaken the power of Satan in these areas.

5 January 1871

I await with impatience for the next French post which will bring your news. Mother Xavier sent us the journal and along with it the messages, you had asked her to communicate to us; all that gave us such joy.

Nothing special has happened here in our work since my last letter to you. It seems that the Protestant Teacher is organising a plot secretly against us; however, we are in God's care and only what He wills will happen to us; we are entirely in His hands!

Last Monday, the Holy sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated for the first time in our house; my good Mother, this tells you that we now have the happiness of being under the same roof as Jesus. We wanted so much this favour and now that our desire is fulfilled, we shall try our best to witness our gratitude to our Divine Master by living close to Him as His spouses worthy of His love, by loving one another reciprocally in order to bring consolation to His heart.

3 February

I am very late in writing to you; I really do not know how I managed to wait such a long time without asking you for your news, for I live in anxiety for our dear Family and our unfortunate country. I am longing to see France freed from her enemies and all who are dear to me out of danger.

All your daughters in Kurunegala are doing well, my good Mother, they always love the good God and their Superiors.

Actually we are quite calm. Monsignor Bonjean is considered the first personage in the Island, even by the Protestants. They are afraid of him. I think that his presence commands their respect and they dare not show this. Our children are extremely good; whatever their religion all are attached to their Teachers; we are agreeably surprised and we bless the good God, for this will be for us a powerful means to do good to them. In the English class, we have six Protestants all sisters. The Protestant Bishop has done everything possible to persuade their Father to take them from our School, but he did not succeed; I hope he will not succeed in the future either. From 1st January, we have got seven pupils of whom three are English and four Sinhalese. The people of the area seem to love us a lot. It is quite rare that a day passes without some one bringing something even though small it is true, but these good people appear to be happy if they have something to give us and that we are really happy to accept their gifts. Meanwhile they are as one would say in a vulgar way, "light fingered" and we have to be careful not to be stolen.

For three weeks we had eight days of torrential rain; one evening our Sisters forgot and left their umbrellas on the verandha. The next morning, at 5 o' clock, our native Sisters on leaving the house saw a man running away near the garden. When the time came to go to Mass, we wished to take our umbrellas but they had disappeared, along with them the native clothes of our postulant. We understood that they were stolen by the man who ran

away that morning. That same evening, a good Sinhalese came asking us to accept two umbrellas (European) to replace those that were stolen. He asked in such a delicate way that we were touched by his attention and the care of Providence. I am yielding to a desire to relate an anecdote which will amuse you perhaps.

Our refectory is adjoining our Chapel; one evening during supper, I saw Sr. Mary speak to Sr Marie Josephine in a mysterious way and in Sinhalese. In a second, all, except myself, guessed what was going on. Without giving me even a moment to reflect, they pushed me inside the Chapel right up to the altar and told me, "Mother, don't move". Each one hurried to leave and to close the door. I stayed there terrified not knowing what to think of all this and I was asking myself how this scene would end. I heard the Sisters beat and the blows that they gave seemed to redouble. I understood that they had to go through the procedure of killing some harmful animal. All of a sudden I was asked to come out of my hiding place and I found myself in front of a group that laughed more and more. I asked them what all this meant. They had seen a huge serpent under the door and to kill it they had taken the big wooden bar. Finally, when the animal did not move at all to defend itself, the Sisters risked getting close to it to see if it was dead. What was their surprise when they saw that it was a piece of cloth (a serviette). I leave you, my good Mother, to imagine the hilarity this adventure had provoked.

25 February

Thanks to God, we are always looked upon well in Kurunegala, even the Protestants find that we take a lot of trouble to do good. What do you think of this, my good Mother. Do they suppose that by any chance we could do otherwise?

We have organised a little choir and every Sunday we sing at Benediction; our harmonious singing attracts a lot of people to the Church. About fifteen days back an article in our favour

appeared in the newspaper. They praised our beautiful singing and went so far as calling us "Holy Sisters". You see, my good Mother, if your daughters had stayed in France no one would have dreamt of canonising them in their life time. Fr. Boutin says that we must very well claim some compensation from our motherland.

The Devil jealous of the tranquillity which the Protestants leave us to enjoy stirs up other problems and dares to interfere in our affairs. Monsignor before leaving for Jaffna had occupied himself with the expansion of our place, that was very (small) cramped for the needs of our work. The proprietor made all sorts of promises regarding this to our Bishop, meanwhile with the intention of not keeping any of them. Today he desires that we accept to live in his house all the time we remain in Kurunegala; impossible to agree to these conditions. You will not believe, my good Mother, how difficult it is to find a convenient residence here; the town is poor and they only build huts in this place. With God's help we hope to get over these difficulties.

The character of our children is essentially independent. We have much difficulty in getting them to come regularly to School; we must say that it is also due to the climate of Kurunegala which is excessively feverish; however, as they are attached more, & more to the Convent, they come quite willingly when the fever does not hold them back. Up to now, we have only one little Buddhist Sinhalese.

A good number of Christians in Europe would blush to see the life of mortification led by the Buddhists and thus to render homage to a shapeless, monstrous statue which they call their God, to whom they have built a Temple on a mountain somewhat as high as the peak in Midi (France); they go on a great pilgrimage to this place.

Some time ago, while going on an outing with a Catholic family, we entered a Temple out of sheer curiosity. I experienced in the first place a very painful feeling that I saw nothing; it seemed

to me that the monsters that were set up before me got detached from their place to jump on me; I hastened to leave this abominable place. These poor blind people ! What should we not do to make them open their eyes !

14 March

I received your good letter this morning itself; it gave all of us inexpressible joy..... better days are going to shine on our dear France; May God be praised. But what a lot of suffering the nation and our dear Sisters of the North have gone through; nevertheless, we have to thank God for protecting, in a manner so visible, our beloved Family.

At this moment, my good Mother, we occupied ourselves to look for a place. We are in a hurry to finish with our actual proprietor. The house which we occupy is so hot, especially the classes that we fear constantly for the health of our children and our Sisters. Monsignor, and Rev.Fr.Salun sent me all the information necessary to get a Government grant; I think that with God's help we will be able to succeed. We are very happy with our children; there is a wonderful spirit among them. For some weeks, I have directed them to the Catechism classes given by Sr. Stanislaus. It is doing them a lot of good and obliges them to be on time at the Convent.

13 April.

We have celebrated whole heartedly the feast of our good Father General. Monsignor willingly gave us permission to have the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in our little Chapel on that day. Rev.Fr.Boutin lent us the big carpet from the Church and with it all that is necessary for this ceremony. The "Moelliard" (Mudaliyar) gave us his harmonium. Our little feast was so pious and so lovely that I imagine I was in the midst of all those I love. In the evening the children had a little drama mainly for the guests.

The misfortune that befell France has impoverished the Mission; Monsignor had to sell his house and his vehicle to help the Orphanages in Jaffna. The Catholics of Kurunegala were so touched by this act of generosity that they asked me to repeat the drama for the benefit of our dear children. Our good Bishop willingly authorised to give this programme yesterday. Everyone was very happy; we had a collection around 300 francs.

Up to now, by a special protection from God, we have had only good responses from the people of the town. The new Government Agent and his wife show a lot of benevolence towards us. They were present yesterday at our little celebration. The Moelliard (Mudaliyar), the Catholics all are very devoted to your daughters. Our children are becoming more and more good. If this continues, my good Mother, we can easily do a lot of good here. The house about which I have already spoken will be free by the end of May. The proprietor has not changed. With the natives the affairs can hardly be done amicably. Their experience consists only in crying, in creating a din or row.....

Small pox raged with intensity throughout the Island. Fortunately, God protected our Sisters in Jaffna and us; no one was sick.

8 May

The news from Paris is getting worse every day and we are afraid for our Sisters and for our good Father General. There is never any mention of the other parts of France which makes us believe that there is no invasion or revolution that is troubling them. I hope, my good Mother, that your next letter assures us that our Fathers are not among the three hundred ecclesiastics imprisoned by the insurgents.

There is nothing extraordinary happening in our Mission except for an insignificant article written by a Protestant in the

newspapers. These unfortunate heretics try to mimic our religious ceremonies in their Churches. Meanwhile, they leave us in peace. Their Minister is sick some months. The choice of a successor is not difficult for them; the first one who comes has the right of an officer. Under these circumstances they are three together to celebrate; The first reads the lessons, the second makes the prayer, the third preaches. As it is very hot, they are careful to use the "punkahs" in their Church to have some air.

Nevertheless, many among them, on many occasions search to be useful to us. The "Moelliard" (Mudaliyar) came to me one day to ask me if I would welcome a visit from the Sinhalese Chiefs. He wanted earnestly to interest them in our favour, for he said, that being rich they would make us some gifts; on my affirmative reply he added, "By showing them the good that you are called to do in raising up the young Sinhalese girls and civilising them, I will incite their generosity and I can get for you 50 books which you can make use of according to your good pleasure". You can judge my astonishment on hearing this and especially on the goodness of Providence! During this period, I was asking myself how I was going to cover the expenses of shifting our place; I was hence happy to accept the offer. I did not get the announced visit either, for the custom holds only to the most important person in the country, but I am certain that the "Moelliard" (Mudaliyar) will occupy himself in our affairs and that he has already collected 18 or 20 books.

I did not say anything about this to Monsignor, so that it would be a pleasant surprise to him when it happens. I did not wish to share this with you either; but you are so far away and by the time you receive this news it will already be stale (news); besides, the matter is certain and I do not hesitate to tell you my secret.

9 June.

Your letter has come to draw us from the anxiety in which we are living now; how many disturbing news have we got from Paris..... Here, my good Mother, we can only pray; we do this with all our hearts for all whom we love.....

We have been very much affected by the death of our dear Sr.Trinity..... Mother Xavier, especially is sure to be affected deeply.

Our work continues to prosper, slowly it is true but here we have to have patience for everything. We hold on unpretentiously to our field; we receive joyfully the children entrusted to us, but as much as possible, we avoid the appearance of looking for Protestant children. Two or three of them asked me, for about six weeks, to teach their daughters music. They even offered to pay me double the fees begging me to reflect on their benefit. I told them that I have reflected enough, that it was pointless on their part to insist so much, and it was not in our line to teach anything but the subject of domestic skills (arts of agreement)

The Blessed Virgin has sent us two children during her month. One of them belongs to the most strong Protestant family in the country; all were very surprised that she left the government School. We are, in general, held in esteem; our classes are counted as the best. We have some enemies, of course, but they are far and they cannot harm us much.

Our numbers in the classes are going up - 37, of whom 23 English and 12 Sinhalese. 8 of the former, learn music two others are beginning to make flowers.

All are well occupied here. For me, apart from the spiritual and temporal direction of the house, I give three French lessons per

week and study Sinhalese. My teacher is one of our native Sisters who does not speak English at all.

6 July

Here we are at last in our new house. It is very spacious and also more comfortable than the other one. Meanwhile, the classes are not that convenient but we must know how to suffer some little deprivation in order to do good, especially in Ceylon. Our house-hold furniture is in keeping with the rules of very strict poverty. We have just each one a chair which we are obliged to carry around from one place to another. The proprietor of the previous house lent us his furniture which we had to leave behind. The very day we came here, we had a visitor - a snake. The next day we installed ourselves as well as possible and on the third, Fr. Boutin came to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in our Chapel also quite simple as the rest of the house; for the altar we had two planks held up on four posts; the rest is in keeping with everything else.

We also celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Pontificate of Pius IX. Our natives do not know how to do anything without noise and for a feast to be impressive; solemn as they wish, it has to be accompanied by a lot of noise. Thus on the previous evening itself, we heard cannon shots; the next day, after Vesper and Benediction which were sung with pomp, there were fireworks. The door of the Church was splendidly illuminated.

The following Sunday the feast of the Blessed Sacrament, a majestic harnessing of bulls took us to a place six miles from Kurunegala; we heard Mass there in a little Mission, where the Holy Sacrifice is said once or twice a year. On arriving there, we took possession of a fine bungalow which Rev. Fr. Boutin had prepared for us..... The poor woman who lent us her hut was constrained to lodge outside the whole day. During the procession

we sang hymns to the Blessed Sacrament and after Mass gave audience to many native women who had never seen religious; they did not seem to have enough eyes to look at us ! Soon dinner arrived! I sent visitors away as politely as possible and came to the table. Our cooks distinguished themselves on that day; they served us turkey soup, the best I have tasted since I came to Ceylon, followed by roasted chicken, curry and fruits.....

All returned to Kurunegala passing through roads that were real death traps but we were contented with our excursion. We have got the family news which we waited for with impatience. All your worries are over. God be praised ! Thanks to our Mothers who have willingly written (a few words) to show us that we are not forgotten; their letters have made me/us happy. All your daughters in Kurunegala are keeping well; we thank God for this for we are not wanting in work. We have received a new postulant; she will be a great help for truly we are not sufficient.

With the authorisation of Monsignor I have accepted as an orphan, another postulant. She is a lovely child of 14 or 15 years. I think, the natives do not ever know their age.

14 September

I received two letters from Paris, one from our good Father General and the other from Rev.Fr.Soullier; these two letters brought us joys and consolations.

Our little work is always almost the same; we have not still received boarders. I do not think either that we will ever have a big number; we are too close to Colombo; inspite of this, my good Mother, there will always be an occasion to do good.

4 December.

We have just had the visit of the Inspector; he appeared satisfied with our classes. He finds that since our School is giving enough guarantees for a good education there is no obstacle to closing down the Government School; we could thus take the extension.

Monsignor announces that he is coming during the month of January; I hope he will be happy with our beginnings; we all wait for his visit with impatience, me especially, my good Mother, as I have a good many things to talk to him about. After our meeting with our new proprietor we have our new place for only three years. All the Catholics wish that our good Bishop buys a piece of land and builds a Convent; I do not know if he has this intention.

The natives impoverish themselves by promising and enrich themselves by giving nothing. They have got back almost all the furniture they had put at our disposal, telling us they have only lent them to us. Now, we have to set ourselves up little by little with our little resources; my good Mother, poverty does not frighten us at all; so long as we can always glorify God we shall be happy.

Some days back, I was washing peacefully in my room when I heard a little sound over my head. I lifted my eyes and saw a long serpent under the roof; I called my native Sisters who immediately came to my help but the creature was entwined around the beams.

Extract from Annals 05

18 July, 1872

My good Mother,

Nothing very special has happened to your daughters in

Kurunegala during this last term. Everything here breathes poverty, simplicity, even the edifying anecdotes; at the moment our life flows in an invariable monotony. The English and the Sinhalese classes with some lessons on other art subjects (arts d'agrement), make up our life. From time to time some worries come to give us diversion; either the children miss their classes continuously sometimes for some months, detained because of the fever in the country or they do not satisfy their Teachers when they think of the examinations.

Our month of May passed quite simply and piously; Some artificial flowers and candles were placed at the feet of the beautiful statue of Our Lady which you had sent us. Each evening after School, our Catholic children come together with us to sing the litany of the Holy Virgin and read some prayers; A Catholic ceremony then follows during which, our children who have been good place a flower at Mary's feet. Those who have been naughty are deprived of this privilege; this is a real sacrifice for them. All of them appear to appreciate this little ceremony, so new to them. On the first evening, all our Protestant students too wanted to assist at the service; they were in the room next to the Chapel but this desire did not last long in them, for I think, it was only curiosity.

We also kept the month of the Sacred Heart but only the community took part in it. On the last day, Rev. Duffo came to say Mass for us and in the evening this dear Priest wished to say some words to our Children who were gathered there. They then made their act of consecration to the Sacred Heart; then he gave us the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

On the 6 of June, Monsignor came to Kandy and His Lordship with a sensitive concern wished to come as far as Kurunegala to make a fatherly visit to us. But he got fever the day he arrived, which compelled him to stay and rest a long time. Fortunately the fever did not continue and we were able to enjoy the presence of our good Bishop for three weeks. We also had the visit of the Director General of Public Education who showed great sat-

isfaction about our English School. The Protestants profited of his presence to ask for a Teacher saying that they had nothing against us but that we did not belong to their denomination and they wanted some one to whom they could entrust their children. The Director listened to everything but did not do anything but seeing that they were not listened to, the Protestants took the matter into their hands. They got together and four among them were put in charge of the expenses to install a new Teacher whose arrival was announced four months back but who had not come. Actually, they were very anxious to find the children; they tried to draw ours by offering to take them for a quarter of what they would pay to the Convent. Up to now, nothing is said about our children going to quit us; in any case we are not going to be preoccupied with the intrigues of our adversaries. To crown our good fortune, the Governor has taken interest to give us a piece of land to build a Convent through the good offices of the Agent. And more, the Director General of Public Education gives us the possession of the Government School with all the furniture contained there; the benches, tables, charts etc... I must say that there is reason for the Protestants to be angry; they are not discouraged, for today they are meeting together to get the repairs done for the house designated to their School. They also claimed all that was given to us but it was too late; for Rev. Fr. Duffo had already taken possession of them. Truly, it is amusing to see all these poor people struggle so much to supplant the "NUNS". They forget without doubt that the support on which we rely is greater than theirs. What the good God sustains is well sustained and what the good Master permits only will happen. I think that actually if they dare to speak the truth, they will say that they are already discouraged a little on seeing the attitude of their co-religionists who tell them that they are not there for a long time.

11 October 1872

I think I have already spoken to you in my last letter, my good Mother, about the pains the Protestants are giving them-

selves to establish a School for their children and also to supersede us. But He who has willed us and still wills that we should be in Kurunegala, knows to take care of us. Therefore, if they do not fail totally they are not going to have all the success that they promise themselves. During the past three months, they announced triumphantly the arrival of a School Mistress; one fine day, this Mistress sent back their money and announced her departure to England. Great was the disappointment of the Protestants who had gone to the trouble of preparing a beautiful house for this Teacher. After so much worry, it was just that they did not hold out to fight for little things; also they knew that they could carry out their affairs in another fashion. In the meantime, the Protestant Bishop came to Kurunegala to ordain a very young Minister, full of zeal for the good cause and he did not fail to put the School under the careful protection of his wife while he himself would be the Principal. For several weeks this gentleman went from door to door requesting for our Protestant children assuring their parents that if they did not send them to School that day itself, he would not accept them at all. His exaggerated zeal amused some and annoyed others. Sometimes, to get rid of him one said, "I have reasons for not removing them from the Convent which I cannot say. Others less afraid replied, "I have told you that I have no reason to take my children from the Sisters' School and I will leave them there". But I must say that his effort was not all useless; three of our children left us, two of them were the best in the Class and we had great hopes in them at the examinations; well, the good God judged otherwise.

In actual fact everything is all right; one speaks of this School only as an ordinary thing and not something to be frightened of. Our children appear to love the Religious and do not want to quit us. We always would like to do them good if that was possible; every one of these little heads is very light, besides the children have among their families such sad examples that they soon lose the good counsels that are given to them in Class. We had prepared one of the children from the English Class for her

first Communion, the child seemed to be good and pious, capable of understanding what she was going to do. But when she asked the consent of her father, he quite firmly said that she was not making her communion. The little girl was very sad but she had to resign herself to her father's decision.

Our English children are few but perhaps more faithful in doing their religious duties; they are conscientious about attending Sunday Mass. All of them are Catholics except one and she too was baptised a few weeks back. Monsignor wanted very much to have a little Orphanage in Kurunegala, but our site is quite restricted and it will be impossible to receive more than six Orphans, until we get our new house. We have already a lovely little child whom we have named Honorine. I have asked our Rev. Fathers to find us a few to complete this little number.

For the last two months, we have had torrential rains which have done a lot of damage; the railway bridges were broken; the routes intercepted, hundreds of cabins drenched or carried away by floods and above all, many lives were lost.

We did not experience anything much of this in Kurunegala except that the price of rice went up, which does not happen easily. Our house was flooded especially the English Class and it has been impossible to keep it dry.

Since we do not have a room big enough to keep all the children together the Sisters were obliged to separate to teach; one of them took the verandah where there was a lot of sunshine after the heavy rains; she looked up by chance and saw a huge snake which was climbing the roof. The Sister called out. "Oh ! Call some one to kill this creature; if our Mother sees it, she will be frightened". The children replied, "Sister, it is a harmless one that eats rats". "Whatever it may be, it must be killed". We called a workman and when he saw that, he said that it was a dangerous one. With a stick, he picked it up but it went from the roof to a tree that touched the house. He brought it down and killed it. When

the children saw it, they yelled in horror; it was a beautiful snake but the most dangerous, the sting of which can cause instant death. It was truly providential that it was seen for had it come inside the house, it would not have been a welcome visitor! Similarly during the heavy rains Sister Stanislaus found snakes in her music room. One day when she opened one of the boxes, she got so frightened that she came running to me. "I have found creatures - a rat, toads and a snake....." Her guardian Angel had watched over her. Not a week passes without our native Sisters killing scorpions and snakes in their room which is on a lower ground than ours..... Every evening I entrust my Sisters to our good God..... thus I am in peace. One night, one of our native Sisters heard something scratching under her mat but as she was sleepy and the lamp was out, she did not take the trouble to see what it was. The next morning she found a black scorpion, half dead; a single bite of this creature is fatal. The good God protects His Missionaries; there is nothing to fear if we trust in Him and of course, have some prudence. In one of my last letters, I told you about the visit of the Inspector in November. These last months have not been favourable to us; we have lost a good number of our children; some because their parents had left the town altogether, others had completed their studies and some had gone to the Protestant School.

It is a trial for us because all these children on whom we depended had left us. On 8 November, we received the Inspector's visit and everything went off well. On 30th of the same month we began the Novena in honour of the Immaculate Conception. We begged our good Mother to bless our School and our little works which are going through the difficulties of a beginning.

Our Orphanage also has its problems; we can count on our little Honorine who has been with us for the last two months. She is a very intelligent child and very promising if she remains for with the natives we have to be on our guard and fear their inconstancy. This little child has settled in with ease and told the

Sinhalese children that she loves everything here in the Convent and will stay willingly with us but there is one thing that displeases her - that is, to become a Catholic. If any one spoke about it, she declared that she would run away without anyone's knowledge. We entrusted this child to the Blessed Virgin and a few days later she asked to become a Christian. We made her understand that she was too young and that she should wait for some more time. She accepted this point and did not speak about it any longer. She continues to say her prayers very willingly and always is very good in her behaviour.

For the Novena of the Blessed Virgin we decided to display all the pomp we were capable of and as we had few decorations, it was quite difficult for us to put up anything attractive. We had placed two bouquets of artificial flowers; as we had very few candle stands, the Sacristan put many little lights on the same stand to form a bouquet of lights. Everything was poor but our Novena was made with great fervour and we have confidence in our Immaculate Mother that she would listen to her children, that she would herself be the protector of our work that is just born.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception was on a Sunday. We could not have our office in our little Chapel; we made up for it by singing at the Parish Mass. On the vigil, we sang the Vespers, which the natives love very much each time we have a solemn feast.

On 5 December we had a feast (of the Spirit) because of the amount of work each one had; it was impossible to leave aside our ordinary routine but Rev. Fr. Duffo wanted to say Holy Mass in the morning; after dinner we had a short recreation; we spoke of our dear Father General, our dear Religious Family and all the rejoicings they would have on that day. Each one was so happy and for an instant we forgot the distance that separated us from the centre of our beloved Family. We felt we were in France..... The day passed joyfully we prayed much for our Father General.

On the 18 we had our Prize Distribution. For several months, Sr. Stanislaus gave herself a lot of trouble to train the voices of our children that are ordinarily shrill and disagreeable. God bless their good will and she successfully organized a little choir that was quite good. The previous evening we had decorated the hall. Rev. Fr. Duffo, always ready to render us service, lent us all the Church decorations - for our natives love to see the more red it is, the more beautiful it is We had a dozen lamps for all these lights help to brighten up the decorations..... I must say that the hall looked quite pretty. The chief personalities of the town were present, among them the Government Agent and the Judge. As the former was late in coming, the Judge delivered the speech.

His discourse surprised us as we knew that he was not for us. He complimented our children who deserved his praises alright..... then he expressed confidence that we would have the Prize Distribution next year in our new Convent. The little feast ended with the National Anthem. GOD SAVE THE QUEEN; all seemed satisfied. The following day the Sinhalese students had their Prize Distribution. Rev. Fr. Duffo presided and everything went off very peacefully. Our holidays then began: we were so happy to have a few days of rest - the only time during the year when we could be together.

The feast of Christmas was approaching; we had a novena of prayers in the Church in honour of the Infant Jesus. On the evening of the vigil, we had to sing at Benediction and also during the Midnight Mass. The Church was beautifully decorated with a lot of lights. After Mass, our indigenous people amused themselves at the entrance of the Church; they had the fire works amidst cries of admiration. The following day, we received gifts. Cakes of all kinds - most often things we would not like. That year we had visits from all our friends - all sent us gifts. On 28th December, we received another little Buddhist child whom I named Rita we had wanted to give a little one to our dear Mother Bonnat. We ask her and you, my good Mother, a prayer for her to our Divine Master for the welfare of our Orphanage, Honorine and

Rita are the only ones there now. I forgot to tell you that Mrs. Wright (the Government Agent) came to pay a little visit to the children of our English Class. She seemed satisfied and our children were encouraged by her presence.

Our Convent building is progressing rapidly and we hope to install ourselves there by July 1874. We pray much for that and we ask you too to do so; in every way that would be a great blessing to us as we are so cramped in now.

***Letter from Rev. Fr. Duffo, OMI, to the Directress General
Kurunegala (Ceylon)***

4 December, 1872

My Very Rev. & Good Mother,

From the time I took over the direction of your dear daughters, I have heard so often your name that I wish to have the pleasure of addressing these few lines to you.

You will be very pleased to hear that our Sisters are very good and very edifying. Their state of health is something that is to be desired but it is not surprising when we see the place they have and work in. Once the new Convent is completed and new members come from France, I am sure everything will go very fine. Actually, if one of them falls sick, there is no one to replace her in School.

The eight native Sisters, without exception are very, very pious and they do not miss anything about their religious commitments. Their unique aim is to reach the highest perfection.

All our works go step by step. There is a certain opposition from some Protestant families who would very well hamper our works while there are others (Protestants) who are very devoted to us. Meanwhile, externally, all are full of respect and esteem for our Sisters.

We have begun the Orphanage for both boys and girls. When we see the customs and the habits of the Buddhist family, we face some difficulties to have little girls. We need a lot of perseverance and time to let these prejudices disappear. The present place does not allow the Sisters to receive a big number of children.

As to what concerns me, I am more fortunate with my boys. I have already six Buddhists. Once our Orphanage building is completed, I can count a 100 or even 200 children. Here are some specimen Buddhist names for your information.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Peter, formerly Kiri Banda | - | Kiri-milk Sinhalese,
Banda-gentleman i.e.
gentleman of milk. |
| 2. Charles, formerly Kiri Hasni | - | Hashni - Lord - so Lord of
Milk |
| 3. Joseph formerly Oukkiou
Hashni | - | Oukkiou - Cream - Lord of
Cream |
| 4. John formerly Ran Hashni | - | Ran - Gold - Lord of Gold |
| 5. Thomas formerly Oukkiou
Banda | - | Gentleman of Cream |
| 6. Adrian formerly Ran Hashni | - | Lord of Gold |

Some of these children come from the woods - real little savages. Joseph, especially, a child of eight years amused the Sisters a lot at the beginning with his wild simplicity. He is the first to find in his little head a special name for them. Rev.Mother Josephine is Loku Hamouduru, the big priestess.

Sr.Stanislaus - Deveni Hamouduru - Second Priestess.
Sr.Josephine - Punchi Hamouduru - Little Priestess

Sr.Josephine is the favourite of all these children as they run to her for all their needs. The harmonium is for them, "A box that cries". At the beginning they would spend hours huddled before the clock to watch the pendulum, the needles and wait for it to chime, which they could not understand.

Some of these children came with pieces of cords or clothes at the end of which were attached a coin or some sign of vow - tied around their necks or arms One of them, John a child of nine has a brother and an uncle who are Buddhist monks.

Actually, these children are at School and during the intervals, they do manual work. They learn Catechism and prayers every day. They will be the first of our conversions among the Kandyan Buddhists for whom they will become, I hope, little Apostles. Please pray for them, dear Rev. Mother, I have already placed them under the protection of Our Lady of Lourdes in whom I have great confidence With Mother Josephine, we have agreed to pray to the Blessed Mother of Lourdes for all our needs which are numerous and urgent.

You will be happy to hear that Mother Josephine begins to speak in Sinhalese. She would be able to work soon without our Interpreter - who is S.M. Josephine who speaks all the languages of the country.

I am sending you the sketch of our new Convent along with my Altar. I have promised Monsignor that the building would be ready on the 1st January 1874. His Lordship replied "Keep your big promises; even the General Ducrot had said," Dead or victorious one has to come down" Whatever may be the case of the brave General Ducrot, I am going to try to keep my word and complete the work for 1874. There are some hindrances, I hope, Our Lady of Lourdes will make them disappear. I will tell our obstacles; it is just that we do not have enough money. We need 400 pound sterling or 35,000 francs. If you could find some Benefactor who would procure for us - this sum that would well arrange everything. My good Mother, if you could, find some help for this project, we are very poor here.

Tomorrow will be the anniversary of the election of our beloved Very Rev. Father General. We will have the celebration at

the Convent, as I will be going to say Mass and give the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the evening. I will write to Father General. If he is in Bordeaux, kindly convey to him my humble sentiments of love, respect and devotion.

Please offer my respectful sentiments to Rev. Fr. Rouillet whom I have seen when I was a young scholastic in Marseilles but I do not know him. As for you, believe me that I am united to you in prayers.

A.M. Duffo, OMI.

Extract From Annals 11.

Jaffna, 30 November, 1878.

It was with inexpressible feelings, my good Mother, that I come to read again, the last notes written by our dear and regretted Mother, for, the final report of the Year is dated, 1st October; Alas ! It was on this date that her illness got back again which carried away our dear Mother, a sickness which was thought a simple indisposition and she was treated for that but which led her to her final end.

I will not give here the details of her last sufferings about which we weep, for these pages would be found elsewhere, but let me speak to you of our profound sorrow and pour out our bitterness into your maternal heart. The good God has visited us with a very painful trial; we have lost the best of Mothers, we are Orphans in a strange land; meanwhile we are not abandoned, Oh! No. I hasten to say that a tender father is there for us; his touching goodness, his compassion for our grief, the paternal care with which he surrounds us, are a precious and much appreciated consolation. The bitterness of our sorrow had been alleviated and we have not weakened before the Cross. But this Cross is deeply planted in our hearts during these days of imperishable souvenir; we have seen our Mother give up her last breath,

then receive the final marks of veneration from her daughters and finally descend into the tomb to await the grand awakening of the resurrection!

On 17th everything was over, we have confided her mortal remains to the earth and we find around us only a void and sadness. Meanwhile, the community got back to its regular life; there is no exercise, no duty which does not remind us painfully of the sad circumstances we are going through.

On 21st His Lordship bade us good-bye and went South in order to go to Goa for the great feast of 3rd December. The departure of our good Bishop made the feast of All Saints even more sad. For the first time since our Mother left us, the Church invited us to rejoice; we took part in these joys as much as our sorrow could permit us; we had at least the consolations which our faith offered us, our hearts searched among the Saints the one whose absence threw a veil of mourning over all our joys.

The following day was marked by the sorrowful stamp of an affliction for us; four of our Orphans managed to escape from the supervision of their Mistress, during the examinations to enjoy their freedom; they got an unfortunate idea to go and bathe in the well that was very large and deep, situated in the far end of the garden; they went all alone and finally to carry out their plans. What happened next? I tremble still to think of it; we came out of our exercise when we saw our native Sisters and the Postulants running to us all scared and crying; "A child has fallen into the well in the banana garden". The older Orphans rushed to this alarm, carrying a ladder and the workers who were around joined them to give them help if necessary. Their assistance was urgent for the child had disappeared under the water; none of them know how to swim; the rescue team could not operate as immediately as we would have liked; the ladder was let down and one of the brave men decided to go down into the abyss which he sounded with a long pole. At first the searches were fruitless but after a lot of hard work he succeeded in picking up poor Ursula

unconscious, without any sign of life. Two Doctors immediately gave artificial respiration which brought her to her senses but she was speechless. As she was in danger, one of the Fathers gave her last Sacrament, he thought he saw some signs of life, during the ceremony and we hope the poor child would have understood her state that in a few moments she would appear before God. On the other hand she had received Holy Communion the previous day and her disobedient act was pardonable because of the frivolity in the nature of the natives. We like to think that our Divine Master who loves the little children so much has had pity on our poor Ursula and has pardoned her weakness. In spite of all the solicitude taken to revive her she did not come round; cerebral congestion had formed and to save her would have been a miracle. After a painful agony of three hours she breathed her last; her companions were dismayed but they resolved never to disobey....

Rev. Fr. Pro Vicar had in his goodness sent immediately Rev. Fr. Pelissier and Massiet, in case we were questioned by the Police but we were saved from this embarrassment, thanks to the good report given to the Chief Police by a native Doctor who had given first aid to our drowned child and by a Policeman who had married one of our past pupils (an Orphan) and who supervised the rescue operation. We were able to have the burial without any more formalities. We thanked God for having saved us of further annoyance, for the Protestants would not have let this occasion pass by, to harm us.

On the 3rd we received a special blessing from His Lordship, the news of his journey to Kurunegale; his health was good due to the change of air. He did not suffer from the tiredness and the depression which gave us a lot of anxiety over him.

Extracts Annals 12

Jaffna Dec. 1879

We have made a little journey to Kayts, my good Mother, and I am happy to give an account of the charming welcome we received from the brave inhabitants of this Island. I had been invited to visit a School for young girls and to see the site that was marked for the construction of a Convent for our native Sisters. I have arranged to respond to this invitation by the beginning of October. I would have liked a very much to take our Sisters with me which would have been a healthy distraction for them but as it was impossible for us all to be absent at the same time. I had to limit myself to choose three companions and on the 1st October after hearing Holy Mass I left with Sisters Ligouri, Marie Louis and Emmanuel.

Kayts is a little Island situated to the West of Jaffna, and as such not very far; earlier the crossing was entirely by boat and offered more or less pleasure to persons who were not familiar with the sea but today the Government Agent has linked by a causeway the Island of Karativu to Jaffna; most of the journey is made by land. This form of travelling which we chose gave us the double advantage of enjoying the sight of the sea and of a luxuriant country side. We were so caught up by the beauty that we first abandoned ourselves to admiring these sights when the horse that was drawing our vehicle began by its sudden leaps, that were quite disagreeable, to show that it was frightened by the rising of the waves; the postilion tried his best to calm the animal but it was in vain; when the horse refused to move we began to be afraid; so we got down and walked ahead. The coach joined us and the rest of the journey was without any incident; we arrived on the opposite pier facing Kayts a little in advance, for there was no one awaiting us. From a distance we saw a decorated launch moving on the other side; one of our Sisters asked as to who was coming; the reply was, she is to receive some distinguished visitors coming from Jaffna. I told that we were the visitors; im-

mediately, a gun shot echoed and the launch came in front of us guided by vigorous boatmen, the vessel was decorated with garlands, drapery of different colours, in the middle of which glittered the British flag; there were beautiful red cushions set for us in the places of honour. The first gun shot signalled our departure, a second and a third were fired during the crossing and a final, fourth, to welcome us on our arrival. We found Rev.Frs. Murphy and Sandrasagra on the shore, with a crowd of Christians who were lined up respectfully to give us the way. Then the procession began. We thought we would walk in the procession but it was not solemn enough, so we had to accept the vehicles. At the wink of an eye, we were brought near the Church by four Christians who were proud to do this job. We entered into the house of the good God to offer Him our sentiments of adoration. We went to the Presbytery, a respectful crowd always following us in good order. The people of Kayts are excellent; the men who live in this region for the most part are brave sea men, big and strong. These are generous Christians who have no human respect and face courageously the sarcasms of the Protestants which they confront bravely.

We received many visits and a great number of presents; each deputation brought us eggs, cakes, and indispensable lemons; for here the greatest mark of respect one can give some one is to offer him a lemon. We welcomed all these gifts with an air of satisfaction and we addressed them with some words in Tamil which filled them with joy.

Towards eleven o'clock, they took us to the site marked out for the future Convent of native Sisters; it was perfectly chosen, in a beautiful site quite close to the sea. The foundations were made already for some years but the poor people could not complete the good work because their resources failed due to drought. We visited the class of little girls; it was called a bungalow - an enclosure surrounded by high pillars; it was surrounded by mats..... The simple building did not attract us but the interesting little family for whom it was destined drew our attention.

There were 160 pupils from the age of 04 to 19, their comportment was blameless. This little world welcomed us with openness which gave us a good impression; the School was well arranged, the floor was bare but for the occasion covered with a carpet; the table was also covered; everything breathed an air of a feast. A little girl came up nicely with a bouquet of flowers which she offered us; while one of her companions told us in simple language of her age, how happy they were to see us in their midst and then desired to see the native Sisters who were to instruct them. I, then, distributed medals which these dear children came to receive on their knees; many men who were there came to get medals - we were touched by their noble Christian simplicity.

We left the School with the sound of gun shots and we went to our room to retire. At four o'clock we began again our excursion; this time we visited the Churches of this Mission., for here in Ceylon each caste has its Church. Everywhere it was the same welcome, joyful, moving, and respectful. In the Church, the women were assembled to greet us "STOTIRAM" pious salutation which accompanied a gesture of bowing profoundly with joined hands. In the Church of St. James, there was great music with trumpets, cymbals, tambourines etc. and to complete this very grand Tamil pomp, they carried two umbrellas of extraordinary size, the edges of which were decorated with beautiful red frills and two kinds of banners.

Jaffna Extracts from Annals 13

P.215

(Passaiyoor, St. Anthony's, Colombogam)

Some days later Rev. Fr. Flanagan invited us to assist him at a reception which the Parish of St. Anthony were going to give the Bishop who was visiting it. We accepted willingly. The feast was as beautiful as they - the poor fisher people could celebrate. They had nothing but their baits and their nets but these men of the sea have gentle and grateful hearts hidden under their rough

exterior. They love their Bishop and witnessed to it in a touching manner His Lordship appeared very satisfied. After visiting the little Church, he directed his steps to the Orphanage of Colombogam which was a little away from there. He was agreeably surprised to come across along the road, a little School for Girls, founded in his absence. The modest thatched building was decorated with bright decorations (oriflammes) inside, the walls were covered with red and white curtains but the most beautiful ornament of this poor enclosure was the fifty (50) little girls with bright faces, an intelligent look, bearing the mysterious seal, the indelible character of holy Baptism.

Our good Bishop wished to sit down a while in their midst to listen to the compliment made by one of the children on behalf of her companions. He addressed this charming little flock with good and loving words, which made them all happy. After this short stop, we continued to go towards Colombogam - it was a triumphant march ! At the beginning of the procession, big red umbrellas were carried; the orphans walked in twos.....

Pages 218 & 219 Kurunegala.

Three days later, I undertook a little journey in the Kaynel where our Fathers have a number of Missions almost a 100% Catholics. I took Sr.Pauline, an indigenous Sister, for my companion, and an Orphan child; at nine o'clock we started our journey using the bus, the train and a heavy bullock cart for our transport..... the journey took 08 long hours after which we had the joy of arriving in Wennapu, the goal of our journey.

The excellent Fr.Chounavel awaited us and he pushed his goodness to the point of abandoning his little house for us and he took shelter in a miserable room with a shade of dried leaves..... I was confused but had to accept.

Soon, the arrival of the Reverend Mother was made known not only in the village but in the surroundings; and on all sides they ran to salute her and to offer her presents of all sorts. Very soon I found myself with an abundance of gifts that I was truly embarrassed, not knowing what to do with all these provisions, bread, fruits, eggs etc.. I stayed for days in this village and I was able to convince myself of the immense good that could be done there by a colony of our Sisters, for, a large part of the population is Catholic and there are hundreds of children to be instructed. At present the School is directed by some young girls who are pious, devoted, under the direction of Rev.P.Chounavel for this work of zeal. There is a good nucleus of fervent Christians who aspire to consecrate themselves to the good God.

The parents without opposing their attraction keep them because they hope always that a Convent will be soon founded at Wennappu where their daughters will be received and they will not be distanced from them; such is the calculation of these brave people who are not sufficiently advanced in their ways of spirituality to understand that the first consequence of the religious vocation is the sacrifice of the most legitimate affections. The question of this foundation was then actively explored; great difficulties presented themselves, for everything had to be found; there, no local site was available not even a piece of land to build.....

P 220

On 15 January, 1882, the classes reopened; on the same day, we received the visit of the Director of Public Education, the good Mr.Brouss, who was very satisfied with the results of the examinations and gave the best report on our classes, even promising that our Institution was far too good for such a small town; that he was surprised at one thing that all the parents were not sending their children. This Inspector is a Protestant and it was easy to see that this remark did not flatter the Schools of his own sect.

P 230

Mother Josephine has been made Superior of the Convent in Jaffna. Monsignor Melizan stayed a month in Kurunegala; during this stay, we could appreciate his devotedness and his interest in our Works; He was the one who had to tell the community about the sacrifice of which they had a presentiment - that dear Mother Josephine was designated to be Superior of the House in Jaffna. This news saddened everyone and the ones who complained most were our dear indigenous Sisters who for ten years had received a lot from this dear Mother formed by her in the religious life, they owe all that they are to her; their affectionate gratitude is not inconsistent with the good they have received; this news of separation was also an excitement "love at first sight" (?) to these poor children. Meanwhile, I should say that they showed themselves capable of great sacrifice and the best witness they gave was their manner, showing that they had profited by the love and care with which they were lavished. We were extremely edified by their resignation in this trial.

TRINCOMALEE

Annals 15

P. 221

Trincomalee, 30 June 1882

Our little foundation (work) has had its trials and for a moment we thought that it could not last. In the meantime the unexpected visit of our good Bishop has changed everything and we continue our life with more courage and confidence. It was towards the end of April we had the visit of His Lordship whose presence is certainly a fruitful source of spiritual favours. Monsignor extended his stay for more than three weeks and during that time, he was so good to preach the exercise of the retreat him-

self. We were confused and touched by his immense goodness, knowing well how numerous his tasks were; he had inaugurated a double Mission, one for the Christians of the town and the other for the military and the Navy who were not the least in his Apostolic ministry.

Before he left, the Bishop gave us the fulness of his blessings, to have under one roof the Eucharist - the One who above all can console the sorrows of exile and give courage to the heart of a missionary. From now on, we will lack nothing, strengthened by the presence of Jesus, we will devote ourselves to his glory, with a new ardour. We know that in our time of trial, we will look to Him for hope and consolation.

These few lines, my good Mother, summarise our first term of this year; our calm and uniform life had nothing exciting about it but we are happy to work with our attention on God alone.

January 1883

Our work progresses in a satisfactory manner. The results of the July examination were excellent; the Inspector remarked that the students had made great progress since last year and he expressed regret that their numbers were not more. The indigenous Inspector also came for the first time to our Tamil School. He was a past pupil of the Protestants and was not well disposed towards us. God came to our rescue; our little Tamil children responded very well. The future of our works in Trincomalee depended on the results.... God be blessed for His help. After the examination, our students had fifteen days of vacation and they returned to the fold very happy to group themselves around us.

We remark with anxiety that the contact with Protestants and Hindus ruins the Christians a lot; their faith is weak and they

easily give up the practice of religion; our poor children growing up in this milieu of indifference can only react in an unwholesome manner. The parents influence them and we have problems to get good results from them. There was a time when Confession was an ordeal to them; we could not get them to learn the prayers that they should know to approach the Sacrament. Very much disturbed by this disposition, I recommended these young souls to Our Lady of All Graces My prayers were heard.

During the month of November, we learnt with sorrow through your Circular, the sacrifice God has asked from our dear Family; He has called our venerated Mother Bonnat to Himself. It was a real shock to us! What a loss for our entire Family!

Annals 16

P. 137

First Stone was laid for The Future Chapel In Kurunegala

Kurunegala, June 1883

The Year 1883 will remain memorable in the annals of our little Mission, for, my good Mother, an event very consoling to mention, the laying of the first stone for our future Chapel took place on 28 January, 1883.

One of our great sufferings from the foundation was the absence of an oratory that was suitable. We cannot call the poor room where Our Lord deigned to reside for ten years a Chapel, Our most ardent desire was to put up a dwelling place worthy of the Divine Majesty, worthy also of Catholic worship; we dare to say that this was also a desire of the Heart of Jesus.

One time when our newly begun works had to sustain a fierce struggle with the Protestant party which held all the important posts in the Local Government, the Superior of the house promised the Sacred Heart to dedicate a Chapel to Him and to work to spread this devotion among our indigenous people.

Once this act of confidence was made, the difficulties that appeared insurmountable up to that day disappeared. Our gratitude obliged us to use all possible means to realise this promise promptly. All the religious, Europeans and Indigenous, Boarders and Orphans, each one put herself out, happy to collaborate in this beautiful enterprise. We counted five years to collect the money necessary for the Chapel. Last year - the results of a third lottery gave us the green light to begin the construction; but who can be happy for a long time on this earth?

The enemy did not delay in revenging us. He knew where the sensitive point lay and attacked our Orphans. All of a sudden without our being aware of anything, our little girls found themselves under the influence of a strange turmoil and became uncontrollable. Not a day passed, when I was not told of a new disorder, a revolt, and these multiplied.

The mistresses, who were native, lost all their prestige.. I prayed to God and proposed to them a retreat for 3 days.... There was a time when they would have welcomed the idea but this time no one responded.. they resisted against "this way of repression" and together decided that they would not accept the retreat....

At first, I delayed executing the plan but afterwards I told them that they would go through the exercise. They submitted to the grace of the retreat and many seemed to have gained something. However, the evil force came back with greater intensity and strong measures had to be adopted. There were two trouble makers (black sheep) whom we had to send away to their parents in order to safeguard the majority of our children from an imminent danger. It was a painful decision as we had to let them go back to their Buddhist parents!.

Annals 17

P.112

Jaffna, Dec. 1885

***Construction of A Simple Chapel Dedicated To
The Sacred Heart of Jesus: Extension of The House***

My report of 1883 underlined the unhealthy state of the site which affects our Orphanage and the need to remedy that which could otherwise endanger their health. This repair has been done, the level of the ground was very low and now it is raised three meters to the level of the building, the windows made large to give more air to the rooms. Henceforth, our dear Orphans will be happy with the change which gives us the hope that they will enjoy good health.

Another Project, very dear to our piety, is the construction of a modest Chapel which has been realised too. This Chapel dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was inaugurated on 15th August, a day of holy joy in the entire Holy Family. Monsignor Melizan always so good to us, wished to offer the Holy Sacrifice in this new sanctuary and to share in our profound joy. The souvenir of the difficulties which we went through during the last four years and which seemed to hinder this work, made our gratitude to divine Providence more alive. One of our ardent desires which was also our dear Mother Xavier's (which she took with her to the grave) was fulfilled; from above she should contemplate our feast with happiness and mingle her prayers with our Hymns of thanksgiving.

What makes us speak with gratitude of Monsignor Melizan here is that His Lordship has not gone back in the face of any sacrifice to help us either to erect the Chapel or to get the funds to extend the house.

Five of our little girls made their First Communion on 15th August. At Holy Mass they were confirmed by our good Bishop during which we prayed to the Holy Spirit for a strengthening of the faith of these children.....

Another ceremony not less touching was the Baptism of fourteen non Catholics - also by our Bishop We had the joy of seeing the number of God's children of the Church grow in our Orphanage.

These consolations compensate the sufferings and they make us forget the sorrows of exile and inspire us to work for the extension of the reign of Jesus Christ. If the results of our Mission are not always visible, they are real and the spirit of piety is remarkable among our Orphans. They are experienced in their work in sewing, and solidly instructed in their mother tongue; they are at the stage of leaving the Convent, formed to be responsible women in the families, some of them, Teachers in our Mission Schools. From the beginning two hundred Christian workers have been formed; we try to multiply families of Faith, of believing religious, in the midst of idolatrous people. About fifty young girls, day scholars, are actually gathered at the Workshop and the class placed under the title of Sacred Heart is always flourishing. We place our hopes on this work, which from now on, works for the good of the lower castes among the indigenous population.

Annals 17

P.114

Kurunegala Dec, 1885.

My Good Mother,

At the close of this year, it is my pleasure to send you an account of the events both small and great, the joys and the sorrows which. Divine Providence has put on the path of your daugh-

ters in Ceylon, during these twelve months. The flowers bloomed under the hot sun, but the thorns also grew with them; in accepting the former, you would also share willingly the latter and pray that the wounds caused to us would sprout new graces for our dear Mission.

During the month of January the good God sent us a consolation that is always well appreciated. Monsignor Melizan going around on his pastoral visit of his vast field arrived in Kurunegala. When they are far from their loved country, the Centre of our religious Family, the Missionaries taste doubly the happiness in the person of the Bishop, the goodness of a father, his kindness is like the rays of the goodness and thoughtfulness of their absent one. In spite of the fatigue of his many engagements, he wished to give us himself the Holy exercises of the Retreat. Under the influence of his penetrating word, confirmed by his example of an untiring devotedness, our souls got back a new vigour; they drank from the source opened to them (of generous resolutions), an ardent desire to work with courage for God's glory and salvation of souls. Only five days could be set apart for prayer and recollection; they seemed rather short and but their brevity did not hinder us from guarding a beneficial souvenir.

Soon, the Bishop left us, taking with him the witness of our filial gratitude, our regrets that he was leaving us so soon.....

On 25 January, a ceremony which made the Missionaries hearts beat with hope, brought us together at Malpitiya, a village four miles from Kurunegala; it was the foundation of a Church. Rev. Fr. Dinaux whose zeal knew no obstacles, no privations and labours of an arid apostolate ever discouraged him, had discovered in this hamlet a population that was good and simple, entirely Buddhist but desirous to renounce their errors and embrace the true faith. Happy about these favourable dispositions, the Rev. Father hastened to profit of their situation; he had instructed and prepared for Baptism many adults; he fixed the feast of

St. Sebastian as the opening of this modest sanctuary which he wanted to place under the patronage of this glorious martyr.

Invited to this feast we left Kurunegala early morning, accompanied by our indigenous Sisters and our dear children Rev. Fr. Dinaux had preceded us 15 days before to prepare for the ceremony the Church was just a miserable shade; four sticks were put up and coconut thatchings were placed on top of them - three sides were also covered with leaves; this was the sanctuary. In the middle an altar was erected This was the new Church where Holy Mass was celebrated and for the first time the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was given.....

After the celebration of the Eucharist we sat under the trees, on a soft carpet of green grass. Soon the people of Malpitiya came around us to listen to the prayers we taught them to say, or to question us. We took advantage of their good will, we told them not to resist the voice of God who was calling them; When we returned, to the lodge that evening we were happy that there was a Catechumenate organised and having a certain number.

..... Rev.Fr.Dinaux unable to clear the ground alone for his dear Christian community that was being born, thought of associating our indigenous Sisters in his holy ministry and he asked me their assistance. With the authorisation of Mgr.Melizan and yours, my good Mother, I agreed willingly to this project. Our Sisters of St.Peter have entered on the path, to realise the goal of their institution.

For many consecutive weeks, the Sisters went to evangelise the village and their efforts were crowned with success.....

The natives welcome voluntarily these humble religious their compatriots, who speak their language and know their customs.....

In the Hospital of Kurunegala where they were introduced as visitors by Fr.Dinaux, our native Sisters had the consolation of working efficaciously for God's glory. In the space of some months, six poor sick people were instructed by them and they received Baptism.....

Our Sisters of St.Peter were installed also in a village situated in the interior, 16 miles from Kurunegala In 1884 this project of foundation was studied. It was a question of sending five indigenous Sisters, to the direction of the Schools of Vennapurai and of Katunery, to help pious girls who desired for the most part to enter the community.

Annals 17

P.118

Foundation of Wennapurai

In the month of October, I went to the place with the purpose of studying the situation; two of the future Teachers accompanied me. We were welcomed with a general feeling of liking; the people of the place showed themselves good, generous, hospitable. When we left, they brought us gifts of money and kind to defray the expenses of our journey. A local habitation very close to the Church was offered by Rev.Fathers, Missionaries; it was a house with 03 rooms, a big veranda and also School buildings.

The site was well chosen for a foundation of this kind, we thought, in the heart of a Christian community that is already flourishing by its numbers and the fervour of its faithful. Its climate is excellent; there are two ways of communication established which make communication easy between Kurunegale and Wennapurai; there is the railway up to Henaratgoda and from there - a 12 hours journey by a bullock cart. On the other route one must be satisfied with the second form of transport; we chose this and we

were happy with our decision.

All the deliberations regarding this foundation were approved by Monsignor Melizan and sanctioned by you, my good Mother. I then left Kurunegala on 3rd of February in the morning with the other five foundresses and after 48 hours of travelling, we arrived in Wennapurai.

The new proprietors of the little Convent installed themselves without any noise; the people welcomed them joyously and an old woman wept on seeing the Sisters (Kanniyastries) The next day Monsignor Melizan was good enough to join us, visit the Schools and confer publicly the title of Mistresses, or the Sisters; they were to be responsible for a hundred and thirty seven (137) students.

Annals 17

P.359

Transfer of the Orphanage at the end of the Year, 1885

Kurunegale. Dec.1886.

My Good Mother,

My journal ended on 18th October and that day I was again at my dear Mission after 8 months of absence..... Allow me to express my deep gratitude for the helpers you sent me so generously. The new Missionaries, Sr.Mary de la Nativity and Sr.Marie Sophie, have brought us a precious assistance to my Sisters who for a long time had been over burdened with work.....

In the month of November, a retreat was preached in the Parish, on the occasion of a Jubilee; our former children of the Orphanage participated in it and renewed their faith. We could distinguish them among the other Christians and were consoled to see them faithful in their practice of their religious duties.....

Thirteen pagans were presented for Baptism on the closing day of the retreat. These dear children desired whole-heartedly to receive this grace and while we wanted to delay this grace for them, they repeatedly begged to be admitted, the greater and more serious the preparation, the better more consoling and enduring are the results.

Many times, my good Mother, I have kept you informed of the lack of space for the different categories of our personnel. You have been willing to share our pre-occupation and united your prayers with ours so that our situation would be remedied. Mgr. Melizan too had wished for this improvement.

Towards the end of the year 1885, the concern of His Lordship made easy the transfer of our Orphanage from the old buildings to another destination. In place of the single building which served as classroom, dining room, dormitory and recreation hall, our little girls circulated with ease in their new residence. They can have their games in the large space around the buildings, when there is a good breeze to temper the troubling heat. They cultivate flowers and vegetables in one part of the enclosure; this is a way to combat the laziness innate in our natives to interest them during the intervals to do something. It is a question of giving them good habits, knowing that idleness is part of their nature and the results obtained have been quite satisfactory to be signalled as a progress.

P.360 - Catholic School For The Little Sinhalese in Kurunegale.

Since the suppression of the (boys) Orphanage directed some time back by the Missionaries, there was no Catholics School for the little Sinhalese children. The parents yielding to

pressure, had to let their children grow up in ignorance or expose them to lose their faith by going to Protestant classes. On different occasions, they had begged me to respond, by creating a new work, to respond to this great need. Their entreaties were also one of my concern, thus, I thought that without delay we could turn one of the halls left free by our orphans into an indigenous School. The prospect of having the children come to this School to study along with other sciences, the knowledge of God and to love Him was indeed very pleasing.

Understanding of this kind always poses difficulties; meanwhile, the formalities demanded by the Government (as on similar events) were carried out without any problems and the little boys below ten turned up in numbers. If our moderate resources allowed us to provide clothes to all who came, their numbers would increase some more. Many of them were unbelievers but all learnt catechism and prayers; this was a way to conversion. An example chosen among many, confirms this hope.

A little pagan girl frequented our School as a day scholar and studied our religion with a touching fervour; in her family, there was opposition to her project to become a Catholic and she was looking for ways to conquer the opposition put up by her parents. She was supported by an energy far above her age, in her efforts and a secret hope urged her in her struggle.

One night, the Rev.Fr.Missionary was awakened by a native who begged him to come without delay and baptise his daughter. He said, "This child went to the Convent, she spoke always of becoming a Christian; her mother and I did our best to change her mind, but she is going to die now and at this point we cannot deny her this consolation." The Priest went in haste to the little hut where our little child lay in agony, he baptized her and warned her parents that they have no right over this blessed child; "She is now ours in life and in death, so do not have any superstitious ceremony over her". A few hours later she flew towards Him whom

one never seeks in vain.

We gave much pomp to this funeral to proclaim by this exterior show the truth of the resurrection. The coffin was adorned with a cross and garlands of natural flowers. Her pagan family accompanied the mortal remains of this soul to the Church. They listened to a sermon on the happiness of heaven. May this dear child obtain for her family the grace to understand the goodness of the divine Judge !

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On 31st December, the community, the Novitiate and the dear orphans offered me their good wishes. We ended the Year at the feet of the Eucharistic Lord, asking pardon for sin, mercy for the blind heart and soliciting for ourselves a fidelity as great as the graces God is giving us. The gift of faith granted to us is sufficient to let us be penetrated with deepest gratitude to our divine Liberator. With these sentiments, we repeat with all the members of the Holy Family the prayer of reparation, the hymn of thanksgiving.

My soul blesses the Lord for the consolations which He has given to taste in the centre of our very dear Family and I send, the Angel of our Mission, to convey to you, my profound gratitude.

P.363

Three European Sisters In The English School 3 Sisters of St.Peter in the Tamil School (in Trincomalee).

This work, wherein the horizon rests limited, does some good, in a humble way. Three European Sisters and three Sisters of St.Peter direct the Schools, the former the English School, the latter, the Tamil School. They form the community. The little Convent gives shelter, moreover to some Orphans of the Holy

Childhood.

The relationship of the religious with the Protestant and the unbelievers bears witness to the confidence which they have been known to inspire, and to the respect the people around have for them. Let us cite an example: a Lady who was friendly with them, gave them her house in the country during their holidays; they spent some days there with their boarders. These girls discovered a temple belonging to the guardian and thinking that they were doing an act of religion, got hold of the idol and smashed it. The pagan was furious; but when the Sister apologised for the act, his anger was calmed and this regrettable incident did not have any embarrassments.

The result of the examination was very satisfactory for 1886, for the two Schools, which are well attended. The European population is essentially a floating one in Trincomalee; The Teachers find their best students leaving them and returning to a heretic milieu, just when their souls appear to open up to the saving influences of the Catholic Religion. This is one of the painful and very meritorious aspects of their Mission in this maritime city, the most picturesque site, in Ceylon.

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Three European Sisters in The English School & Sisters of St. Peter in the Tamil School (in Tricomalar).

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