

**LIFE OF MARY MONHOLLAND,
ONE OF THE
PIONEER SISTERS OF THE
ORDER OF MERCY IN THE WEST**

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Life of Mary Monholland, One of the Pioneer Sisters of the Order of Mercy in the West by A
Member of the Order

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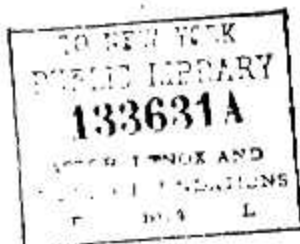
BY

A MEMBER OF THE ORDER.

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"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

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PREFACE.

To a casual observer it might seem that there are few saints to be found in the world now-a-days; that hearts have grown cold; that religious enthusiasm has in a measure disappeared; that bodily penances are little practiced; that the spirit of self-sacrifice is rarely met with; that forgetfulness of self, to benefit others, does not mark this materialistic age. In reality, it is not so. There are real, living, work-a-day saints, to be found in many homes—monastic and secular—of whom the world knows little or nothing. The present century has seen some.

Mother Margaret Mary Hallahan, a Dominicaness of Irish descent, and English birth, born in London, in 1803, was accounted one. During the greater part of her life, she worked as a domestic servant, giving satisfaction to her employers, adorning her soul with many virtues, difficult to practice in her state of life. She loved servitude, affording her, as it did, opportunities for practicing self-denial, mortification, submission to God and man. It was truly to her—the hidden life. She lived twenty

years in the service of a Catholic family in Belgium. The people of the city of Bruges, revered as a saint, the pious domestic who was so often seen in her own corner of the church. The most inclement weather did not prevent her attendance there.

In 1842, she returned to England, after spending thirty-nine years of her life in Belgium. Then, Bishop Ullathorn, first learned her worth, and assisted her in founding convents, orphanages, schools, and hospitals, which facts have passed into monastic history. Bishop Ullathorn wrote of her: "Rare as suns are those souls which seem to act on other souls like a sacramental power, shedding the rays of their own inward sense of God, and vital warmth of spirit, into the souls that come within the sphere of their action. Here, we come to understand the greatness of this soul, so ardent, vigorous, expansive, diffusive. Not that she diffused herself, but the enlightening, warming, invigorating grace within her, whereby she opened souls to her influence, as the sun opens blossoms into flowers; and not only did other souls open themselves, but they bowed themselves to the force of her superior spirit."

Mother Catherine Spalding, Foundress of the Sisters of Charity, of Nazareth, Kentucky, was accounted one. Although born at the close of the last century, the usefulness of her life, as a religious, extended into the present century. A log cabin served for her first convent. A second log cabin,

added to this, was used as a seminary for girls. The poverty of her community was extreme. To preserve life, she and her devoted companions, worked together in the fields, planted and husked their own corn, cut their fire-wood, fed their cattle, spun the material of which their clothing was made, dividing the intervening time between religious exercises, and study. They took little sleep. Burning with enthusiasm, Mother Catherine infused her own spirit into the hearts of others. Bardstown and Nazareth Monasteries are lasting monuments of her zeal. She founded many convents, schools, and asylums, in her native state. When this great Sister of Charity found her end approaching, she summoned the sisters to her bedside, begged pardon for any disedification she had given them, and then requested them to place her on the floor to die, in which penitential posture she yielded up her soul.

Mother Seton, Foundress of the Sisters of Charity in the United States, was accounted one. Beautiful, accomplished, gifted, in the first days of her widowhood receiving hospitality from warm-hearted, Italian friends, whose household devotion led her to contrast the cold formalism of the Episcopal Church, of which she was a member, with the vitality of Catholic faith, she instinctively turned to its altars, wondering why she had not done so before. An extract from a letter written by her at that period, explains her changed feelings:

Leghorn, Italy.

All the Catholic religion is full of those meanings that interest me. They believe Rebecca, that all we suffer, if we offer it for our sins, serves to expiate them. You remember when I asked Mr. Hobart—afterwards the Protestant Bishop of New York—what was meant by fasting in our prayer book—as I found myself on Ash-Wednesday, saying foolishly to God: I turn to you in fasting, weeping, and mourning; and I had come to church after a hearty breakfast, full of life and spirits, with little thought of my sins—you may remember he said something about its being an old custom, etc., which remark did not strengthen my faith.

“Well, dear Mrs. Filicchi, with whom I am staying, never eats, this season of Lent, until after the clock strikes three. Then the family assemble, and she says she offers her weakness and pain of fasting for her sins, united with her Saviour’s sufferings. (What do we do?) I like that very much; but what I like better, Rebecca, is, that they go to Mass here every morning. Ah! how often you and I have sighed when returning from church on Sunday evening, when the door was closed on us, saying to each other: ‘No more until next Sunday.’ Well, here they go to church at four o’clock every morning.”

Shortly after writing that letter, she entered the Catholic Church, her children following her example. The record of her religious life, thenceforth, is a history of marvels. The Sisters of Charity, known