CIRCULAR LETTER No. 109
OF THE
VERY REV. SUPERIOR GENERAL
TO THE
Congregation of the Holy Cross.

NOTRE DAME, IND., March 5th, 1851.

REV. FATHERS AND BELIEVED CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST:

Mr. St. Mary's teaches us a lesson we should never forget. The misfortune of this time-honored and celebrated Institution is now the subject of public and private attention everywhere. I mean here no censure of any one individual connected with the venerable college; I take simply the declaration now made public of its failure and bankruptcy, as an occasion for some important remarks which I intended presenting to all our religious since nearly twelve months. Emmitsburg is not, unfortunately, the only place from which we have heard of pecuniary embarrassments; but it is the most recent and most painful for us, as it is directly in our line. Such a warning should not be lost, but wisely profited by, to bring reform wherever needed.

Such dreadfully gloomy annuncements, so painful to Religious and so humiliating for Catholics at large, make me feel more keenly than anything else the awful responsibility of my charge. Poor as it is, yet it is a relief to avail myself of this opportunity to confess that what terrifies me most, since twelve years, is the obligation, civil or moral, I have assumed before the public, to shield us against debts. In presence of such a sad reality, no one will find it strange to be required to the strict rules of general economy, without which we should not deserve the name of Religious, especially in the administrative circles of the Congregation. Wherver a religious council is itself governed by due respect for its constitutions and superior authority, there is no danger of any serious commital; but if this is not so, who can foresee the result? Altar! we have made enough and a great deal too much of such ridiculous experiments, profile only in consequences of the worst nature. Weak minds always fancy they have only to erect such and such a building, or to yield to the entreaties of such or such an interested adviser, etc., etc., to see the outlaw covered at once and made a source of profit! I leave you to qualify such undertakings.

"Not only will they go lightly over the boundary and have beyond their means, but they will scarcely stop at any bounds to secure patronage and fill up their halls. They will reduce their prices and make reductions at that, rather than miss an opportunity to increase their number, upon the principle of that celebrated merchant who sold everything at a discount, expecting to find his profit on the quantity. At least, you may say, we make friends and grateful ones. Are you very certain of this? Experience has taught me a different lesson, I reprove it for

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