

## PART SECOND.

No. I.

LETTER TO FATHER GENERAL MOREAU.

[Translation.]

NOTRE DAME DU LAC, Dec. 5, 1842.

REV. DEAR FATHER:

It is a long time since you received any news from me; but you will overlook my delay on account of the claim to your consideration which I am happy to make. It was almost impossible for me to write any sooner, inasmuch as I waited from day to day the dispositions of Divine Providence in order to be able to give you some definite and positive information; and it was only to-day, at eleven o'clock, that I was enabled to do this. First, I must acknowledge the receipt of your check for 510 francs, which I have just had cashed. During the past three months, I have received two letters from you, which I gratefully acknowledge. May God ever preserve in our dear family of Holy Cross the joy and happiness which they express, and with which they have animated our hearts even here in distant St. Peter's!

"Man proposes, but God disposes," says the old pious adage, and I never realized its truth so much as at the present moment. On arriving at St. Peter's, and especially on beholding the warm reception extended to us—so many marks of kindness and affection shown us by every one, not only Catholics, but all, without distinction—I believed that it was *there* God willed that we should fix our abode, that that spot marked the portion of the vineyard in which we were to labor and die. With this conviction, which daily became more and more fixed and firm, we set actively to work, and soon we had everything ready to build at the approach of spring; in a word, we were, as they say in English, *settled*, as it were, at St. Peter's. Then, when we least dreamed of it, Providence permitted that an offer should be made to us of a section of excellent land (640 acres) *in the county of St. Joseph, on the banks of the river St. Joseph, and not far from the city of St. Joseph*, forming a delightful solitude—about twenty minutes' ride from South Bend—which solitude, from the lake it encloses, bears the beautiful name of *Notre Dame du Lac*; and, besides, it is the centre of the *Indian Mission*, the Mission of the Badius, the De Seilles and the Petits.

Tell me, Father, could Priests of Our Lady of the Holy Cross and Brothers of St. Joseph refuse such an offer? However, I did not wish to precipitate matters. I took time to pray and to reflect. Finally, a Council was held, and it was decided that we should accept, gratefully, the generous offer of our worthy and beloved Bishop, and that we should beg St. Peter to permit us to go to Notre Dame—to the land of her holy Spouse, our august patron. A few days afterwards I set out, with seven of our intrepid Religious, those who could be most useful in arranging things for the reception, a few months later, of the rest of the House and the desired colony from France.

We started on the 16th of November, and, indeed, it required no little courage to undertake the journey at such a season. I cannot but admire the sentiments with which it pleased God to animate our little band, who had more than one hundred miles to travel through the snow. The first day the cold was so intense that we could advance only about five miles. The weather did not moderate for a moment; each morning the wind seemed to us more piercing, as we pushed forward on our journey due north. But God was with us. None of us suffered severely, and at length, on the eleventh day after our departure, five of us arrived at South Bend, the three others being obliged to travel more slowly with the ox-team transporting our effects.

Our arrival had been expected and much desired. At South Bend we met with the same cordial reception which greeted us, fifteen months before, at New York. A few hours afterwards we came to Notre Dame du Lac, where I write you these lines. Everything was frozen, and yet it all appeared so beautiful. The lake, particularly, with its mantle of snow, resplendent in its whiteness, was to us a symbol of the stainless purity of Our August Lady, whose name it bears, and also of the purity of soul which should characterize the new inhabitants of these beautiful shores. Our lodgings appeared to us—as indeed they are—but little different from those at St. Peter's. We made haste to inspect all the various sites on the banks of the lake which had been so highly praised. Yes, like little children, in spite of the cold, we went from one extremity to the other, perfectly enchanted with the marvellous beauties of our new abode. Oh! may this new Eden be ever the home of innocence and virtue! There, I could willingly exclaim with the prophet: *Dominus regit me . . . super aquam refectioes educavit me!* Once again in our life we felt then that Providence had been good to us, and we blessed God with all our hearts. When we returned to the house of Madame Marie, as the Indians call her, we found it too small to accommodate us for the night; and as the weather was becoming colder, we made all haste back to the first lodgings that had been prepared for us in the

village. Next day it did not take us long to establish ourselves better at Notre Dame du Lac, for we had but little to arrange. The following day—the Feast of St. Andrew, the Apostle—I said my first Mass at Notre Dame, where M. Petit so often before me had offered the Holy Sacrifice, over the tomb of the saintly M. De Seille, whose memory is still fresh and revered throughout the land, and who, visiting for the last time his various missions, announced to his congregation that they would see him no more in this world, though he was then still young, full of health and vigor, and who, a few days after his return, realizing that he was dying, and having no priest to assist him, dragged himself to the altar, administered the Viaticum to himself, then descended the steps and died. His body, in accordance with his own wish, was interred at the foot of the altar. I have already met here men of widely different views on religion, but with all, without exception, the memory of this just man is held in benediction. I cannot express how happy we are to possess the remains of this saintly missionary! The death of M. De Seille was a great loss to the Mission, especially on account of the Indians among whom he had done so much good. His place could be supplied only by M. B. Petit. I knew M. Petit, the worthy Apostle of the Indians, only through chance meetings when travelling. But now, as I possess all the books and writings which he left to the Mission,—now, that everyone around me is continually speaking of the good M. Petit, and that everything here, from the altar on which I offer the Holy Sacrifice to the very table on which I write these lines, reminds me of dear Father Petit, I intend to make him my model, and if I cannot imitate him, I shall, at least, at a later date, tell you of what he has done.

While on this subject, you will permit me, dear Father, to express a feeling which leaves me no rest. It is simply this: Notre Dame du Lac has been given to us by the Bishop only on condition that we build here a college. As there is no other within five hundred miles, this undertaking cannot fail of success, provided it receive assistance from our good friends in France. Soon it will be greatly developed, being evidently the most favorably located in the United States. This college will be one of the most powerful means of doing good in this country, and, at the same time, will offer every year a most useful resource to the Brothers' Novitiate; and once the Sisters come—whose presence is so much desired—they must be prepared, not merely for domestic work, but also for teaching; and perhaps, too, the establishment of an academy. And who knows but God has prepared for them here, like at St. Peter's, some good and devoted Novices? Finally, dear Father, you may well believe that this branch of your family is destined to grow and extend itself under the protection of Our Lady of the Lake and St.

Joseph. At least such is my firm conviction; time will tell whether I am deceived or not.

But the more I feel penetrated with gratitude for so many blessings from Heaven upon our work, the more do I realize my own incapacity to long direct the undertaking. In good time you gave me the direction of some five or six Brothers in America, but you will understand that now all is changed. The present situation demands the presence of an able leader, one possessing, as much as possible, the qualifications prescribed by our Constitutions. It is for you, Reverend Father, to make the choice which will meet all the requirements of such a mission. As for me, I frankly acknowledge my own incapacity and my repugnance to figure any longer here, except to live in obedience, which alone could make me happy. But, it may be asked, am I then tired of the work of the Brothers, and do I want to be recalled to France? No, Father, neither the one nor the other. I love the work of the Brothers, as much, I think, as one can love it, and less than ever do I think of a return. But to declare everything without reserve, I love, too, the Indians of M. De Seille and of M. Petit. I thank Heaven that I am now among them. No, I cannot believe that it was without some special design that, for many years, God inspired me with so great a desire to labor for them; I cannot suppose that, without any premeditation on my part, He has brought me among them from so far, simply to see them without being of any service to them. Do not be afraid, dear Father, to wound my self-love by changing my first obedience. I shall be glorious, for I see nothing in the world, to be preferred to the condition of a missionary among the Indians. I have been informed of the best means of inducing them to do good, and I hope, with the help of God, to succeed in this some day. I am still young, I shall learn their language in a short time; in a year I hope to be able to understand them. I shall often write to you about my dear Indians, and, no doubt, everything concerning them will interest you. Let me then hasten to my dear Indians. Yes, it is settled—you grant my request—you permit me to look upon this flock, now without a shepherd, as my own portion. Thank you, Father; please write me as soon as possible, that I may see your permission with my own eyes. To-morrow, or rather, this very day, I shall commence to study the language. When your letter comes, I may be able to return you my thanks in Indian.

You have perhaps learned that M. Chartier, Superior of the Seminary at Vincennes, became, six weeks ago, an assistant priest of Holy Cross, supposing that you would permit those to be admitted amongst our number whom I should judge sent to us by God. I asked him to come and preach the annual retreat for our Brothers in the month of August, and I kept him eight days for

my own. Three weeks afterwards he asked to return to St. Peter's, where he was received. At present, he has the direction of the parish and the chief portion of the Community, until such time as the Wabash River will be high enough to permit the transportation of our goods with little expense. You will be kind enough to tell us when he should return to France to make his profession; for, as regards his novitiate, you will, I think, permit him to make it here, especially when the man whom I asked you to send will arrive. I do not believe that this circumstance can be a reason for retaining the priest whom you intended to send. About fifteen days ago, the Bishop told me that, instead of one, you would do well to send two. I do not need to remind you of your promise: one Priest, two Brothers and three Sisters; these we ask for in every letter; all are needed. I forgot to tell you that one of these good Sisters is necessary for the Indian mission.

You will excuse this long letter; I have not yet freed myself from my old faults. If, however, I knew those whom you had selected for us, even though a little fatigued, I would still prolong my vigils to congratulate them on their beautiful vocation. I would tell them of our beautiful lake, the delightful banks of our neighboring river, etc. O, what a happiness, as it seems to me, God reserves for those generous souls for whom the icy North has no terrors! Truly, it is somewhat cold here; but, though at times the blood does not circulate freely through one's members, provided the heart still beats with love for the work of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, what more is needed to make happy the Christian, the Religious? Let me, then, say to the dear colony:

Fear nothing, then, except to lose confidence in God. We shall pray for you every day. Do not wait until May; you must be with us, if not to begin, at least to finish the beautiful month of March. Otherwise, as the Bishop informs me, the expenses of the voyage will be greater. On your arrival in New York, you will be furnished with directions to reach the shores of Lake Michigan, which is only thirty or forty miles from here; and when you come to Notre Dame du Lac, your joy will be increased a hundredfold. Oh! what acts of thanksgiving shall we not then make to Heaven! Then we shall speak of the blessings and goodness of Divine Providence. You will tell us of all that has transpired at Sainte-Croix since our departure—the various incidents of your long voyage and, united together, we shall sing our hymns of gratitude to God, of joy to Our Lady—as we did but yesterday on the arrival of the rest of our little band.

Our dear *confrères* at Sainte-Croix know full well that, from Father Chappé to the last in the family, we love them all, as brothers, with a heartfelt, enduring love; the Brothers, the Sisters, all the inmates of Ste.-Croix, are dear to us beyond expression. Let

them accept this assurance from us. In return, we ask of each of them a little remembrance each day before our Lord and His Blessed Mother.

Pray, then, pray often for all of us, and especially for the poor Indian missionary, who signs himself the devoted servant of all, but particularly of your Reverence.

E. SORIN.

*(Extract from another letter, written about the same time.)*

MY DEAR FATHER CHAPPE:

May God be blessed for the many consolations He has given me, in the midst of my new flock at Notre Dame du Lac, where, before I came, there had been no pastor except the missionary from Chicago—86 miles from here! . . . I have not yet seen my poor Indians; they have gone hunting, not being aware of our arrival. If they knew a priest was here, they would return at once and throw themselves at his feet to receive his blessing. Their return is fixed for the 6th of January, and then I shall undertake to give them a retreat with the aid of an interpreter. . . . I am tempted to complain, dear friend, that our Lord sends me no other suffering except to see my dear children suffer around me, without, usually, the power to assist them. Lately, one of our good Brothers had his foot frozen, and another one of his toes; and I had just fifty cents, sufficient, perhaps, to permit me to show that I was not altogether insensible to their sufferings. But, as each one understands his mission, all are happy and contented. See herein what grace can do! We have at present but one bed, and they insist that I should take it. They themselves sleep on the floor, just as they did for three weeks at St. Peter's. To-morrow I shall give up my room to Brother Marie, to be used for his shop. Assuredly, we are far from complaining of the poverty of our lodgings. God knows that we think little of it; and if we have desired—as we do indeed desire—to build a large and more convenient house, it is solely that we may be able to accomplish some of the immense good that we are called upon to do. Sometimes, when I think of the good that can be done throughout this country had we a college conducted according to Catholic principles, my desire to erect such a building torments me, and disturbs my rest; but, at other times, when I consider that we have hardly the third part of the funds necessary for such an undertaking, I try to convince myself that God does not will it, or else that He has reserved for Himself to supply, in His own good time, the means of building the college. Ah! how hard it is to refuse children when this refusal obliges them to enter Protestant colleges and there receive that which it will be so difficult afterwards to

eradicate! Tell me, dear Father, cannot Notre Dame de Sainte-Croix do something for Notre Dame du Lac? . . . At least, send a good supply of winter clothing with the dear colony, whose arrival we so impatiently expect, but for whom we have not a cent to spare for a long time to come.

E. SORIN.

No. II.

NOTRE DAME DU LAC, Oct. 13, 1845.

REV. FATHERS, DEAR BROTHERS, AND SISTERS:

Scarcely do I need to repeat that your generous and affectionate feelings towards me most surely meet in my bosom with a faithful echo. It is particularly on such occasions that I feel, with the Apostle, my heart open and enlarged for you. Truly and sincerely may I address you, in answer to your pious and fervent wishes for my happiness, in the words of the same Apostle: "My dearly-beloved brethren and most desired, my joy and my crown, grace be to you and peace! I give thanks to God always for you all; making a remembrance of you in my prayers without ceasing, being mindful of the work of your faith and labor and charity." Be glad; I repeat to you; rejoice in the Lord, who blessed you with a holy call. With great difficulty could I find expressions to convey you the abundant consolations of my soul during these short days of retirement in meditating on the wonderful blessings with which our humble ministry has been attended among you. Yes, my dear friends, we are comforted in you in all our necessity and tribulation; now we live, if you stand in the Lord; for what thanks can we return to God for you, in all the joy wherewith we rejoice for you before our God? Oh! may the Lord multiply you and make you abound in charity towards one another and towards all men, as we do also towards you!

The more Divine Providence is pleased to bless and to increase our little flock, and, at the same time, to perfect your good will and dispositions, the more also do I feel the weight of my responsibilities and the pressing necessity of sanctifying myself, lest I should be a stumbling-block to you, or an obstacle to the diffusion of God's graces upon your unceasing exertions. Could affection alone qualify me for all your wants, I should not feel unequal to the task. But when I consider, in the presence of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, the immense good which may be done, the multitude of souls that may be saved from eternal destruction if we are faithful to our holy call, while it fills my heart with an unspeakable admiration and gratitude, I cannot help trembling through all the faculties of my being, and then would I cry to you with St. Paul to the Romans: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ