

TO MISS MULALLY, 29 SEPTEMBER 1776

[1]

This is a pleasure I have longed this some time past for: which was to acquaint you that, what Dr Moylan mentioned to you about two years ago, that I had a desire some establishment should be made to keep up the schools for the poor children. Not finding any person here inclined to undertake such an affair, made me at last consent to the Doctor's request; and last Christmas I took in three persons to join me in this good work. What made me defer all this time was finding myself so improper a person to undertake it. The Almighty makes use of the weakest means to bring about His works.

[2]

I am to send two out of the small number we have to Dr Moylan, as he is very impatient to have them; and in my opinion they are very proper to make a foundation in Kerry, as they have great talents and every virtue proper for it.

[3]

I send you the rule which they follow — it's called The Sisters of the Charitable Instruction of the Sacred Heart of Jesus - by this most respectable clergyman, Mr. Shortall, who is most zealous for its success and. will give you a particular account about it. I could wish that we may unite in this Society, and am confident that the great God will direct you to what is most to His glory.

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TO MISS MULALLY, 24 AUGUST 1778

[1]

I hope you are so good you won't impute my not answering your kind favour only from the true cause, which is the constant hurry I am always in and from the great aversion I have to writing, which hinders me when I have a moment to spare of profiting of it. I can [not] express the pleasure it gave me to hear from Mrs. Fitzsimons [that] your health is so much better. I am in hopes that this summer will re-establish it perfectly and that the Almighty won't take you to Himself till you see our rule established in your city, as I think none can tend more to His honour and glory in the world than it does.

[2]

I wish it was in my power to do what you proposed to me and I should have readily undertaken it. But I am so much involved in debt, as the first Foundation cost me between four and five thousand pounds; and I can say with truth that one farthing nobody contributed till the Ladies began their new building and chapel; then some well-disposed persons helped towards it. Since the Ladies come [came] over they never spared me anything, as to the expense I was at about the schools. So you must imagine from this how little I am at present in a situation of making a Foundation in Dublin, I can hardly at present support the one I have made here.

[3]

I discharged the mistresses, all to [except] one whom I had employed such a number of years that [I] could not part with her. And as to the others, I had great fault to find with them that live at [a] great distance from me; and [I] could not see the schools they took care of, only [on] certain days in the week. I should, I am afraid, [have] had never courage to undertake this establishment, only seeing how improper seculars, that did it only for bread, were to take care of poor children; it must be them that have true zeal. We have the charge of them ourselves, and, thank God, they never were tended as at present in every respect.

[4]

The building I [undertook] at a time I could not afford it, has much perplexed me to get money to go on with it. In my opinion a person that has the name of a fortune are the most unfit persons to undertake any foundation, except they can themselves support it. You may be sure I should think myself happy anyway to contribute to it if ever in my power. When we are settled here well and in our new house, as I am informed Miss Corballis's health is much better, she could come and stay with us for some time; and [it] should cost her nothing, as I would readily pay her expense coming down and going up, and the journey may be of service to her

[5]

One thing I am resolved to make a rule among us is: that we never dine abroad or visit or go abroad only to the chapel, the schools or business. Any person[s] that could not conform themselves to this I should think very improper to take to it. I hope we will show the world that nothing makes us go out only where charity obliges us.

[6]

As to the person you recommended to me: if I wanted one without a fortune, you may be sure on your good opinion of her I should prefer her. She is happily settled, and there are many in this town that have a good vocation and are great objects of charity; and the poorer they are,

so they have talents, [it] would be them I would have, as your [our ?] rule obliges us to take pensioners where there are no proper schools for young ladies.

[7]

I must beg the favour of you, as you are acquainted with Mr. Fitzsimons to ask him if he brought over with them some books that my sister French gave him at Spa for me. There is one that I would be mighty sorry was lost, as I dread they are all, which is the Rule of the Grey Sisters, which, as I am afraid, I will find it very hard to get another; and I intend[ed] when I got it translated to send it to you. The other books are the Office of Our Blessed Lady, which we could not get them to buy here, in Latin. I sent for some and if he has them, you'll be so good as to get them from him, and to keep them till I get a safe way of getting them here; as when Mrs. Creagh gets goods from Dublin, they can come at the same time. I am extremely obliged to you for all the civility you was so good as to show her daughter, and the young lady is very acknowledging of it and presents you her compliments.

TO MISS MULALLY, 31 OCTOBER 1778

[1]

I could not slip this opportunity without assuring my dear Mrs. Mulally the pleasure it gave me to hear she arrived safely and to assure her the trouble it gave me that I could not have more of her company whilst here, which I am every day more sensible of the advantage I should have reaped from it. The hurry I was in at that time made me neither think of [forget] many things which I should have been glad to have had your opinion on.

[2]

My thoughts were so much taken up about my nieces preparing for their voyage, which, thank God, was a lucky one, as they had a passage of thirty hours; and if I did not send them by that ship, they would not have gone this winter, as none of the Bristol traders have sailed since and I would not have ventured them in this bad weather to sea. I had a letter from my sister French since they parted, wherein she tells me that Mr. French had hurt his leg, which prevents his leaving Spa at the time they intended; and as I have not heard from her since, I am afraid it's worse and that they won't be at Cambray when their daughters arrive there.

[3]

I am sure she will mention to me what answer that lady you wrote [about] will make; which, if pleasing, I shall lose no time to communicate to you, as I was very much distressed since the young woman that lived with me [who] went with my nieces, left this. I have a gentlewoman that I really was resolved to take this some time past, when fixed in the new house but not till then; one was so much wanting at present as their rule orders to have them on trial for some months. She attends the schools and I hope I shall have no reason to repent of the choice I have made as my first motive was charity, hearing of the great distress she was in, by a lawsuit and an extravagant brother that spent part of her fortune. She has had the best education this Kingdom could afford and has many useful talents, [and shows] the great[est] patience in all her misfortunes, and humility; and [she] seems at present to rejoice at all she has suffered, as it has placed her in so happy a state. She takes much delight in teaching poor children. I hope also that some part of what is due to her will be recovered.

[4]

All our Sisters assure you of their most affectionate respects. You can't imagine how melancholy we were at night after you left us, our recreation passed in speaking of you; and

be assured you were not forgot by us in our prayers. I hope you think of me in yours, as nobody wants it more than she who is with the highest esteem, dear Madam, your affectionate friend and humble servant, Nano Nagle.

We all unite in begging you'll be so good as to present our best compliments to Miss Corballis.

[5]

P.S. It gave us all a vast deal of trouble to hear that you have been so ill since you went to Dublin. I hope it was not owing to any cold you got on the road. I had a letter from my sister since I wrote this letter, as Mrs. Creagh expected to leave this [town?] much sooner, but was disappointed in not getting a re-turned coach. She does not mention one word about what you wrote to Miss Bellew nor [sic] what I wrote myself to her, only that she had received all the letters I wrote to her. As she was not there near as soon as I expected, she got a good many from me. It was the day after her daughters arrived that I heard from her; and she tells me they all dined at Sir Patrick's, where there was a great deal of company; and it was there she wrote to me, by which I imagine the hurry she was in, and not having an opportunity to speak about your affair prevented her from saying anything of it to me. In my answer I begged she would use all her influence with that lady, which I am sure she will. I hope in her next I shall [get] some account of what will be done. Adieu.

TO MISS MULALLY, 16 DECEMBER 1778

[1]

What prevented my not [sic] answering your kind favour and assuring you the pleasure I had to hear that you was better, [was that] I deferred writing as I every post expected a letter from my sister French. I did not hear from her since her children went, only once which was the day after they went to Cambray, till this moment that I received a letter from her; and [I] shall mention to you every word she writes to me. In regard of it, she says, as she was quite a stranger, ignorant of the institution [it] never having been anywhere she was in, she could give Miss Bellew no great information about it, but that I had it in this town. She is sure that [since it is] you who manages the charitable institution in Dublin, she will be governed very much by you, as far as it will agree with deceased's] intention. We must leave it to the Almighty; He [will] do everything for the best in it, I hope.

[2]

You was [so] good as to tell me that you would [be] content if I wrote you only a few lines; [this] makes me conclude this [letter], being in a great hurry as generally [I] am. And I [wrote] you a long letter by Miss Creagh, who was going to Dublin, only delayed so long. I believe they won't go till after the holidays. As nothing new has happened since, I refer you to what I mention in it. All our Sisters unite in begging your prayers. We did not forget you the day you mentioned

TO MISS MULALLY, 17 MARCH 1779

[1]

Though you'll get a letter by the bearer that I wrote some months ago and that you got a letter by post from me, yet I could not let this opportunity pass without assuring you the pleasure it gives me to hear you are so well recovered. I have not heard anything farther from my sister French about Miss Bellew, and I believe we shall not till she sees yourself.

Miss Creagh will acquaint you in what manner Miss Brady left us. If you remember, when you was [sic] here, I told you that I did not like her; and to be sincere, I was very glad she went of herself. What vexed me was that I imagined the Ladies of the upper house was resolved to take her on what fortune she could bring, and I had reason to believe she was sure of it. Which made me speak to Dr Butler about it, and he desired me not to say one word to them, till he spoke first to them; [in] which I obey[ed] his Lordship. And when he asked them about it, they denied it: all the chiefs in the convent she never spoke to, as they say it was only to some of the young ones. When his Lordship proposed to them never to take any I had received and [that] I should not take any from them without their consent, as it would give scandal that they should take persons on small fortunes that was resolved to be of our Society—they readily complied with his request, and I hope will keep up to it. It's a good sign of our future success that we should meet with crosses in the beginning. All our Sisters] here join me in our sincere love to you and Sister Ann [Corballis].

TO MISS MULALLY, 30 OCTOBER 1779

[1]

It gave me great pleasure to find that your journey back agreed so well with you. I hope it will be an encouragement to you not to slip any good opportunity to see your friends here, which would [give] them so much pleasure. I am much obliged to you for going to see my sister French. She mentions to me that she was sorry it was not in her power to pay you any compliment as she was not in lodging of her own. I am sure she would have been happy to improve her acquaintance. I am glad to hear Miss Bellew is so well disposed to do what you would desire. I hope the Almighty will direct what is most to His honour and glory.

As to the rule I was so desirous to get, which was that of the Grey Sisters, I believe it's not what I have got. They call it Hospitaliers, they call the rule the Third of St Francis. They make the three religious vows for life. More than half the year they are obliged to fast on one meal, and the rest of the year to abstinence from flesh on Mondays and Wednesdays. They have of late been dispensed with saying the Great Office, and only say that of our Blessed Lady. But they have such a number of other prayers that I should imagine they could have little time to attend the sick. This is the rule they follow at their great monastery at Nancy in Lorraine, and where I believe the young woman died that was sent from Dublin. By what I can judge of it, I am afraid if it had pleased God to have spared her her life to come over, I believe she would not have succeeded in this Order in this Kingdom; so the divine Providence does everything for the best. They must be of robust constitution to be received into it, it's mentioned.

[3]

Dr Moylan wrote to the Superior of an Order that is called the Hospitaliers of the Order of St Thomas de Villeneuve. She [is] a particular friend of his. She tells him she would send him the book of her rule and constitution, only it's absolutely forbid by their Superior-General to

show it to anybody; so she could not send it. She writes in what it consists: which are the works of mercy, spiritual and corporal. They have different houses for these charities which are most useful. In some houses they take care of the sick, [there are] others where they instruct orphans, others where they have boys as well as girls separately, others where they take care of old men and women, others where they receive pensioners—the daughters of citizens and young ladies of distinction. They have houses for penitents and in some places, she says, they are of great service to prisoners. She says she was honoured in these employments, wherein she found most solid consolation; though despicable in the eyes of the world, yet God deigns to look on with goodness. Their rule, prescribes a double charity, which is to instruct the unfortunate, to instruct them in the principal mysteries of religion. They make three vows for life as other religious do; and there is a fourth they make, which is to serve the poor till death. In the houses [in which] they take pensioners they are obliged to have a school for poor girls, on account of inspiring the young ladies with a charity for them, that they should see their wants; and the nuns in them houses also instruct women that come [to them] to know their religion. The education they give their young ladies is quite different from all the other convents. When they know well how to read and write, figure and work, and are well grounded in their religion, then they are employed in going through every employment proper to manage a house and are made good housewives. The young ladies brought up with them are generally very notable as to worldly affairs.

[4]

As to their obligations in other things, it's just the same [as] we have in their constitutions. And we are obliged to most of these charities, only we must prefer the schools to all others, and we make no vows for life. The Cure of St Sulpice who made our rule was the Superior-General of this Order; and by what I see there is very little difference, only we make no vows [for life]. And my opinion is that what hinders their Superior from anybody's seeing it [allowing anybody to see the rule] [is] that in the world they don't know they make vows for life. Now you and your wise and pious director, [who] by what you have told me of him, seems enlightened from above, will judge what is best, for this Kingdom, of the two rules. And till I have your opinion, [I] shall say no more on that subject.

[5]

I am very busy preparing to fill up our new house; and if it's the divine Will to send you any good subjects to keep up your school, you may rely there is nothing in my power I shan't do if they come here. Though I know myself so incapable, yet they will see good example from our Sisters and their time will be employed.

TO MISS MULALLY, 29 JULY 1780

[1]

I believe my long silence has surprised you. Be assured it was not for want of a sincere love and respect. The delay was owing to my waiting to give an account that we were fixed in the

new house, which I thought we would have been there at Christmas. [It] was prevented by part of the wall of our yard being broken down to make room for cars to come in to bring stones to make the garden wall for the Ladies—which if I prevented, must have cost them a vast deal on this. I did [not] leave my old habitation, as I could not have the back part of our house exposed, it was not safe to venture. We have dieted ourselves there since Ash Wednesday, which we found more convenient.

[2]

Then when the disturbances broke out in London, I was afraid to venture, imagining the same contagious frenzy may break out in this kingdom. So [I] waited till the times seemed quite peaceful, yet notwithstanding we stole like thieves. I got up before three in the morning [and] had all our beds taken down and sent to the house, before any was up in the street. [I] begged of the Ladies not to say a word about it to anyone of their company that would come to see them. Nor did [I] not let any person know it in the town of my friends, as I was sure [that by] acting in this manner the good work could be carried on much better than in making any noise about it. We removed [on the] 15 [July], so were there on the festival of our Blessed Lady, under whose protection we are. I hope she will preserve us from our visible and invisible enemies and make this house prosper and others of the same Charitable Institution in time.

[3]

I imagine the lady you had hopes would settle something towards a foundation for this Society, will defer it at present. And you may rely on me that I shall never send you any from this that I should not think proper for the place. I have some thoughts of taking two in soon. I shall not say anything of them till we live some time under the same roof, then one would be a much better judge. I know great fault was found with me for dismissing Miss Wolf. I never told, my reasons to the public, only to a few that I could not avoid— though I was accused of doing what was very uncharitable in her regard—for fear of being, any detriment to her. She was taken in at Mrs. Moran's to teach the young ladies; and if they liked her, she intended to take her to be a nun. They did not keep her a month, as they found she was not fit for that state of life. I pity her, as it's not her fault, only her misfortune. Dr Moylan: I gave him your letter to read, and he desired me to assure you of the high esteem he had for you, and at the same time to beg you would ask Father Austin if he did not tell him, at the time he made Dublin his way when coming from England, the same faults that were found in your friend here, and [if he did not] beg he would write to her on them to see if she would change. And I believe there is not one that lives with her thinks she has the least zeal, as they are all very good religious and very exact to keep up to their rule. I believe they would be glad to live in more peace than she is disposed to do.

[4]

As you were so good as to desire to know how my eyes were that was so many months very sore, I, thank God, got the better of them. And I must tell you how I was cured, which [though] I believe few will try this receipt that had such a wonderful effect on me! One of the coldest days last winter and a most sharp piercing wind—and [I] found nothing affected them so much as the wind—though I thought I might on account of them plead some excuse, yet at the same time it was not giving good example not to go through as much as the others, and I walked out to the school at North Gate. And, so far from any bad effect on them, I did not find them worse, and [but], I may say with truth, vastly better; and ever since, thank God, [they] have continued so. I think any little labour I have, the Almighty has given me health to go through it; and if I did not make use of it in His service, He may soon deprive me of it.

[5]

I hope yours is better. We all pray for your long life, and your Sisters beg I will assure you of their sincere love, and mine to Miss Corballis. I thought to send this by Miss Creagh that was. She has married a young gentleman who [with whom] I hope she will be very happy, as he has so good a character and I know him to be mighty charitable. Her uncle is to leave her at his death the best part of his fortune; she will have, I am sure, above £6,000. I must beg you will present my best respects to Mr Mullan.

TO MISS MULALLY, 31 JANUARY 1783

[1]

I should have had the pleasure of answering your kind favours before this, only [I was] waiting to have it in my power to send you the £7 which I promised when I had the pleasure of seeing you here. As I may say with truth, few, I believe, is more distressed for money than I am, or you should have had it much sooner. Mr. John Folie will pay it to you, as I have given orders, when he receives some interest due to me; he will pay you whenever you send for it.

[2]

It gives, I can assure you, I [me] and our Sisters the greatest pleasure to hear that you are in so good a state of health. We were in trouble when we heard you was so ill. We offered our poor prayers to the Almighty, if it was His divine Will, to spare you longer to do good; and [I] hope you'll live [to] do a great deal more. The best works meet with the greatest crosses. I don't approve of your desponding so much as I perceived in your last letter. Though [neither] you nor I should not [sic] live to see it prosper in our time, yet I hope it may [prosper] hereafter and be of universal service to the Kingdom. I comfort myself with this thought, when I am most dejected at the many disappointments I have met with.

[3]

We received a novice on the [Feast of the] Presentation of our Blessed Lady. We had a very fine sermon at the reception. There was only a few friends and the clergy present, as our chapel is small, nor did I choose [that] it should make a noise in the town. I shall give you my opinion of our novice from a nine months' acquaintance; nor should I depend on the knowledge I have of her myself as [much as on] the character I had of her since infancy, to think she is really a chosen soul. To say the truth of her, I never saw anybody in Ireland like her for zeal, mortification and humility. She never is so happy as to be [when she is] employed in works of mercy either spiritual or corporal and that she would be from morning till night. I believe she would not think of eating, if she was left to herself.

[4]

I am building the house I spoke to you about for the old women, [for] which I was obliged to apply to the charity of the public as I was not able to build it at my own expense. She longs as much to have it finished as a fine lady would to go into a fine house. Her vocation would be rather more to be an Hospitalier, only she thinks it is more meritorious to take care of the soul than the body. She is only eighteen years old. I am in hope to get another young lady that is very like her as to piety, who has a fortune; she is very young and her parents want to try her.

[5]

I have made a pretty garden and enclosed all the ground part of their house —which has cost a great deal [for] making the walls. We could not do well without it [to provide] some place to walk in, as nobody we receive will go out only [except] to the chapel and to the schools.

[6]

Our Sisters beg [that] I would assure you of their most affectionate compliments. Our Sister Burke has had the yellow jaundice above this twelvemonth and has tried cures, and nothing yet has been of any service to her; so we are very much afraid that she never will get better of it. We all unite in our sincerest regards to Miss Corballis; and be so good, when you see Mr. Field, to give him my best respects and many thanks for [the] book he was so good as to send me. The reading of that lady's life I wish may be [the] means of others imitating her.