CHAPTER II

THE "WHITE HOUSE" — FIRST STUDENTS — BISHOP FLAGET AND FATHER DAVID — MOTHER SETON'S DIFFICULTIES — RULES AND CONSTITUTIONS

1810–1812

On the 20th of February, 1810, the Sisters moved into part of their dwelling, a log house of two stories fronting to the south, the main entrance being in the centre of the building. At the east end was a kitchen and on the west side was another addition which contained the sanctuary and sacristy, and had an apartment at one end where strangers might assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The choir where the Sisters heard Mass was in front of the altar and by means of a folding door could be opened into the sanctuary or separated from it. When the Blessed Sacrament was conveyed from the little stone house a procession of the Sisters was formed and Father Dubois carried the Blessed Sacrament to the new tabernacle with all possible solemnity, every heart uplifted in joyous hymns and praise. The procession was headed by Sister Veronica with a bell and a cross. Father Dubois carried the Ciborium, and Mother and the Sisters followed. Sister Sarah supported the invalid Sister Cecilia Seton. There were no rich decorations in the little chapel but all virtues exhaled sweetest fragrance and made it a delight to Him "Who loves to dwell with the children of men." A picture
of our Saviour, which Mother Seton had brought from New York was hung over the altar, while on either side of the tabernacle stood her own little silver candlesticks with some wild laurel and a few artificial flowers. In front of the altar was inscribed those significant words of our Saviour, "This is my command that you love one another."

The school was opened February 22, and many pupils attended from the village and surrounding country. Mother Seton placed her Community in a particular manner under the patronage of St. Joseph, the special protector of those charged with the care and instruction of youth, and desired that the solemn invocation of the Divine blessing should take place on his feast. The first High Mass sung in the large chapel was celebrated for this reason on March 19, 1810.

Cecilia Seton's health was fast declining but her soul was growing richer in merit with every pain and privation. Her beautiful letters are the expression of a soul marvellously pure and perfect. By the advice of physicians she was taken to Baltimore early in April. Mother Seton, a Sister companion, and Anna Maria Seton accompanied her. Before the end of the month, she had passed to her eternal reward. Her body was conducted by a procession of the clergy and a concourse of admiring friends and acquaintances to St. Mary's Chapel, where a Solemn Mass of Requiem was celebrated for the repose of her soul. After the ceremony, Mother Seton and companion with Rev. Father Clorivière went immediately to Emmitsburg to lay all that was mortal of the beloved Cecilia in their last resting place, the "little woods" of St. Joseph's Valley, April 30, 1810.¹

¹ Seton, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 84; White, op. cit., p. 279.
Writing at this time to a Protestant friend, Mother Seton said, "Dearest Harriet and my angel Cecil sleep in the woods close beside me. The children, and many of our good Sisters to whom they were much attached, have planted their graves with wild flowers, and the little enclosure which contains them is the dearest spot to me on earth. I do not miss them half so much as you would think, as, according to my mad notions, it seems that they are always around me. At all events, separation will not be long."

On May 14, the first boarders of the Academy, five in number, came from Frederick County, and others followed soon after, so that in June there were forty pupils at St. Joseph’s, thirty of whom were boarders. Mother Seton had excellent assistants who took charge of the regular daily curriculum, while she superintended the school, visited the classes, encouraged or reproved, and in every way incited both pupils and mistresses to a lively zeal and ready performance of their duty; in fact she established then what is now called the "practice" or "model" school.1 Applications for admission to the Community were becoming more and more frequent and Mother Seton felt that the blessing of God was with her work. She directed her best energies, therefore, to the training of the novices. She gave them conferences on a great many subjects but especially on their future work as religious teachers. For the Sisters’ guidance in the school-room, she wrote

1 Burns, Catholic School System, p. 215. In a letter to the present author Dr. Burns says, "No one can gainsay this—that Mother Seton was really the maker of our parish schools, and that she was evidently raised up by God for this purpose. If she had not come just at the time she came, with her community, it is doubtful if the bishops and priests would have been able to cling to the idea of the parochial school in the face of the tremendous difficulties in the way, chief among which was the lack of Catholic teachers."
rules touching on the minutest details of conduct and intellectual acquirements. Towards the end of May, 1810, she comments in a letter on the difficulties of her foundation: "You know the enemy of all good will, of course, makes his endeavors to destroy it, but it seems our Adored is determined on its full success, by the excellent subjects he has placed in it. We are now twelve and as many again are waiting for admission. I have a very, very large school to superintend, every day, and the entire charge of the religious instruction of all the country round. All apply to the Sisters of Charity who are night and day devoted to the sick and ignorant. Our Blessed Bishop intends moving a detachment of us to Baltimore to perform the same duties there. We have here a very good house, though a log building, and it will be the Mother House and retreat in all cases, as a portion of the Sisterhood will always remain in it to keep the spinning, weaving, knitting, and school for country people regularly progressing. Our Bishop is so fond of our establishment that it seems to be the darling part of his charge: and this consoles me for every difficulty and embarrassment. All the clergy in America support it by their prayers, and there is every hope that it is the seed of an immensity of future good. You must admire how our Lord should have chosen such as myself to preside over it, but you know He loves to show His strength in weakness, and His wisdom in the ignorant; His Blessed Name be adored forever. It is in the humble, poor, and helpless He delights to number His greatest mercies and set them as marks to encourage poor sinners."  

Bishop Cheverus of Boston and Bishop Egan of Phil-

1 White, op. cit., p. 280-281.
Philadelphia called at St. Joseph's in November, 1810, and were greatly moved by the fervor of the Sisters, while the Community felt honored and encouraged by the visit and benediction of the holy prelates. When the Bishops reached St. Joseph's, a Sister went to Mother Seton and told her there was some one in the ironing-room asking for her. Mother repaired thither at once and learned the names of her guests. As soon as Bishop Cheverus made himself known to her she fell on her knees, seized his hands which she bathed with her tears, and remained kneeling for more than five minutes without being able to utter a word. He spent the day with the Sisters and made them very happy, speaking to them as if they were his children. He said "Dinner Prayers,"¹ read the Gospel, "What went ye out into the desert to see," and made his visit an unforgettable event. Mother Seton had a tender remembrance of it and the Bishop also seems to have treasured it for a little card sent by him says: "The Bishop of Boston sends his thanks and respects. Never will he forget and he begs not to be forgotten in the prayers of his dear Sisters." Mother Seton wrote the date at the bottom

"St. John of the Cross, November 24, 1810."²

To Mother Seton the coming of Bishop Cheverus was a joy inexpressible. Even before her conversion, through the influence of Mr. Filicchi he had shown his friendship for her, and since her entrance into the Church he had aided her by his advice in all important matters. In his correspondence with her he had shown also great interest in herself, her children, and her community, but she had never met him before.²

¹ Special prayers which follow the particular examen at 11:45 A.M. daily. A portion of the Gospel is always read.
² Archives of Mount St. Joseph, Ohio.
On the resignation of Father Dubourg, Rev. J. B. David was appointed Superior. He had come to the United States in 1792 with the Reverend Fathers Flaget and Badin, and, on the way over, he studied the English language. Bishop Carroll gave him charge of a mission in Maryland where he labored during twelve years. He was the first to conduct spiritual retreats for the faithful and found it a very effectual means of reviving piety in his different congregations. He was professor at Georgetown College in 1804, and, in 1806, he was called to St. Mary’s Seminary, Baltimore. In the autumn of 1809 he was made Superior of Mother Seton’s Community. Excelling in the virtues of obedience and simplicity, he inspired all with a desire for their acquisition, and in his instructions to the Sisters insisted on their practice, saying, “the true spirit of religion is a spirit of infancy which knows no disguise.” He also cautioned the Sisters to be very candid in explaining their physical ailments. He was the second Superior appointed for the little Community in its short term of existence, and Mother Seton had learned the inconvenience of frequent changes in that important office. Although each superior, and the spiritual director, who at times discharged the same office were wise and holy, they were not always of the same opinion regarding many things and it was fortunate for Mother Seton that Archbishop Carroll had always taken a lively interest in her establishment and had reserved for himself final decisions in matters of moment. Mother Seton kept him informed of her joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments. On November 2, 1809, she wrote: “Since you left us, Rev. Mr. Dubourg has been here for some days, and I am not without hope that he will again resume
his charge as Superior—you know there are many reasons why I wish it, and if it cannot be for any length of time, at least until Rev. Mr. David’s situation is decided, for you know if he should go with Bishop Flaget we shall have three changes in one year: besides, the temporal management could not be done by him and (under the circumstances) it is very difficult to divide it from the spiritual.”

Bishop Flaget, who had been nominated for the diocese of Bardstown in 1808 and had persisted in refusing the honor, now determined to visit France and be relieved of the threatening burden, but a letter of Pope Pius VII was handed to him when he reached Paris in which he was commanded to accept the appointment. Mother Seton had taken advantage of Bishop Flaget’s journey to France to request a copy of the Rules and Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity founded by St. Vincent de Paul in Paris in 1633. The Bishop spoke with so much earnestness to the Society in France that some of the Sisters, urged by his zeal, were preparing to come to America to assist the new Community by explaining the rules and duties and the methods of observance. The following is taken from a letter written by Marie Bizeray when she found she could not leave France on account of Napoleon’s orders.

*Bordeaux, July 12, 1810.*

**My dear sisters:**

As it is not in my power to leave France, I write for the purpose of proving to you that you are the object of my thoughts. I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you in a few months, as the Almighty who calls

1 Baltimore Diocesan Archives. Transcript in Archives of Mount St. Joseph, Ohio.

you to our holy state, and has inspired me as well as many of my companions with the desire of being useful to you, will not fail to prepare the way for our departure. . . . As Monseigneur Flaget will have made known to you the dispositions which his zeal and holy interest for you have awakened among us, I will conclude, dear Sisters, soon to be companions, by assuring you of the sincere and entire devotedness and respect of Your very humble Sister,

Marie Bizeray,
Unworthy daughter of Charity,
Servant of the poor.”

It was not in God’s Providence that the French Sisters should help to establish the American Sisters of Charity as it was certainly not Mother Seton’s wish, though Rev. John B. David had planned this and other changes which he wished to make in St. Joseph’s Valley. Bishop Flaget reached the United States in July, 1810, and gave to Mother Seton a copy of the Rules and Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity in France. A letter written by her to Archbishop Carroll shortly afterwards explains very clearly her feelings regarding the changes contemplated by Father David.

“My most honored and dear Father:

Your much esteemed letter was accompanied by one from Rev. Mr. David, announcing his intentions to give us a retreat immediately, and as there are neither rules arranged, nor his successor appointed, nothing but confusion can be expected from his plan. General confessions (which have already been made to Rev. Mr. Dubois by almost every individual) and a new act of examination in those dear hearts, now quiet and tranquil, will be the consequence of a retreat whenever it takes place,—and why should it be agitated before the regulations are made which are hereafter to bind them, and why should they be made

1 White, op. cit., pp. 205–96.
by a superior on the point of leaving us, to be revised and probably remodeled by his successor and thereby subjecting us to a new change. I do beg and entreat you as you so much wish our peace and tranquillity not to consent to a retreat until you have given a formal approbation. I would not urge you, my Reverend Father, on the subject if I had not witnessed the effect on the mind of our Sisters when the retreat was proposed at the time of Mr. David’s Visitation in the summer and the great disappointment it will cause when they will find there are no more regulations after the retreat than before — and certainly if any are proposed to us without going thro’ the necessary discussion & approbation I can never give the example of accepting them. The messenger who takes this letter will also take one to Rev. Mr. David suggesting the inconvenience attending his plan: — if afterwards, it takes place, I must refer all to the Almighty Ruler.”

Like all chosen souls, Mother Seton had to bear the interior trials resulting from misunderstandings and she made these known to Archbishop Carroll as early as January 25, 1810. She wrote:

“DEAR AND MOST HONORED FATHER:

St. Joseph’s house is almost ready and in a very short time we expect to be settled in it — you know our rules have hitherto been imperfectly observed, but now the moment approaches when order must be the foundation of all the good we can hope to do, and as so much depends on the Mother of the community, I beg you to take her first in hand for I must candidly tell you that she is all in the wrong — not from discontent with the place I am in, since every corner of the world is the same to me if I but serve our dear Lord, nor with the intention of our institution, for I long to be in the fullest exercise of it — but circumstances have all so combined as to create in my mind a confu-

1 Baltimore Diocesan Archives. Transcript in Archives of Mount St. Joseph, Ohio.
sion and want of confidence in my Superiors which is indescribable. If my own happiness were only in question I should say how good is the cross for me! this is my opportunity to ground myself in patience and perseverance, — and my reluctance to speak on a subject, which I know will give you uneasiness, is so great that I would certainly be silent, but as the good our Almighty God may intend to do by means of the Community may be very much impeded by the present state of things, it is absolutely necessary that you as the head of it and to whom of course the spirit of discernment for its good is given, should be acquainted with it before the evil is irreparable. Sincerely I promised you, and really I have endeavored to do everything in my power to bend myself to meet the last appointed Superior in every way, but after continual reflection on the necessity of absolute conformity with him and constant prayer to our Lord to help me, yet the heart is closed and when the pen should freely give him the necessary details and information he requires, it stops and he remains now as uninformed in the essential points as if he had nothing to do with us, an unconquerable reluctance and diffidence takes place of those dispositions which ought to influence every action, and with every desire to serve God and these excellent beings who surround me I remain motionless and inactive. It is for you, my most Reverend Father, to decide if this is a temptation or what it is. Mr. Cooper who is on a visit to Baltimore knows many particulars I cannot write, which his interest in our community has made him unavoidably observe and which I beg him to make known to you. If you think proper to make known the contents of this letter to the holy Mr. Nagot, you will do so, but if after consideration of every circumstance you still think things must remain as they are, whatever you dictate I will abide by through every difficulty, continuing at all times and in every situation your most affectionate daughter in Xst.

M. E. A. S.  

1 Baltimore Diocesan Archives. Transcript in Archives of Mount St. Joseph, Ohio.
Shortly after entering upon his office, Father David had removed Father Babade, whose spiritual direction both Mother Seton and her companions very much valued. In a letter dated August 6, 1809, she says to Bishop Carroll:

"My dear and tender Father:

It was my intention to have written to you on my first arrival at the mountain, but so many things concurred to disappoint and distress me that it was impossible to say anything that would not give you more pain than pleasure. Rev. Mr. Dubois, who is all kindness and charity to us, we begin to get accustomed to, and we also have the consolation of observing in some degree the system which is hereafter to govern us, and no doubt the goodness of our Lord will support us through all our weakness and infirmities. Yet, as you are truly our Father, it cannot be right to conceal from you that both myself and Sisters have been greatly chagrined by a letter received from our Superior, soon after I came here, which required of me, not only myself to give up a correspondence with a person in whom I have the most confidence and to whom I am indebted for my greatest spiritual advantage, but also to eradicate as far as possible from the minds of the Sisters that confidence and attachment they all have for him. Sister Rose and Kitty Mullen are the only persons in the community who have an interest in any other director and, as all the rest are of one heart and voice with respect to Father Babade, it seemed severe regulation,—and with respect to myself it was cutting me off from the advice of the only one of nine different priests I have confessed to from necessity, to whom I ever yet had opened my heart or been able to draw the consolation and instruction so necessary in my situation: but accustomed as I am almost habitually to sacrifice everything I most value in this life, I should have acquiesced quietly, tho' my heart was torn to pieces, but the others could not bear it in the same way. All this, my
dear Sir, has been the source of a thousand temptations, and the enemy of all good has tried us hard you may be sure — added to all, it pleased our Lord to withdraw from me all comfort in devotion and deprive me in a manner of the light of His countenance at the very time the foot of the cross was my only refuge. Now I am going straight on by faith, but if I were to indulge myself instead of rejoicing in the delightful prospect of serving and knowing God in a situation I have so long earnestly desired, death and the grave would be my only anticipation, but you know your child too well to believe any such indulgence is allowed — on the contrary, I abandon myself to God continually and invite all my dear companions to do the same. Today the Superior has given the Sisters a copy of the rule relating to correspondence, which permits every one to write once in two months to the Director they prefer, on subjects of direction which are designated. None of us ever desired anything more and if this had been understood at first, much uneasiness would have been spared, but the Adored Will be done! and do you, our dearest Father, but bless us and pray for us and all will be well. My own troubles will teach me I hope how to comfort others and serve as a payment of some little part of the great debt I owe. May they last until death if good will come from them, only do, do pray for your child and be so good as to promise that you will not speak of the contents of this or any other letter I may write you, that without restraint I may speak to you as to our Lord. Our dear Rose is my treasure — she is truly excellent. Kitty, too, is all goodness. They lay their very heart at your feet, united with that of their unworthy Mother, with dear Cecilia’s and all your children.

Can you, will you forgive all this detail? Pity a creature so imperfect. All my hope is that your dear self like our Lord will accept the good will. Always yours with truest respect and affection. M. E. A. Seton.”

1 Baltimore Diocesan Archives. Transcript in Archives of Mount St. Joseph, Ohio.
Archbishop Carroll like many of his colleagues felt that Mother Seton’s Community was to play a very active part in the spread of Catholicity through the United States, and he studied every detail regarding it and gave its affairs much prayerful deliberation as we shall see in his letter of approbation. Mother Seton poured into his fatherly ear all her trials and hopes. On September 8, 1809 she wrote:

“MY FATHER IN GOD:

Our Superior has written us the welcome news that we may expect our Father Babade here in a short time, but mentioned that he did not know if you would give him permission to hear the Sisters. How many times since I have begged our Lord to direct me what to do. On one hand I know it may displease you if I say any more on the subject and on the other side my dear girls are continually begging ‘O dear Mother, do write the Bishop, he is a father to us and will not deny our request,’ but I have put them off until the last few days. My Cecilia is again sick and blistered and, her pains being accompanied by particular depression of spirits, the only consolation I can give her is the promise of writing you to beg in her name and the names of four other Sisters, who desire the comfort and feel the necessity as she does of unfolding their souls to him, that you will allow them the privilege which will insure their contentment and peace — for my part I assure you that if it is not granted to me you will leave a soul so dear to you in a cloud of uneasiness which can be dissipated in no other way. It would seem as if our dear Lord has inspired this confidence in my soul and in those of many others around me for my severe and painful trial, circumstanced as I am — His ever Adorable Will be done, but as He permits us to desire and express that desire to you as our Father, you will not be displeased with me for

again troubling you on a subject on which you seemed already to have made known your intentions.

May I beg as the penitent at your feet that this may not be communicated to any one — if Mr. Dubois should know this request was made his feelings would be hurt and it would answer no purpose.”

Again alluding to this subject she wrote to him: “The truth is I have been made a Superior before being initiated — and this must excuse all — being a convert, and very much left to my own devotion how greatly attached must I be to the one who has shown an increasing care for my soul and done everything to enlighten it, and discovered to it the full consolation of our holy faith. In my place, dear Father, you would have experienced my trial, but you would at once have offered it up to God. I am late in seeing the necessity of this measure, but not too late I hope since it is never too late with our good Lord and He can dispose every heart to accommodation — you will see how good a child I am going to be — quite a little child, and perhaps you will have often to give me the food of little children yet, but I will do my best as I have promised you in every case. That I am sure of your prayers for my advancement is one of my greatest comforts. All the girls would beg to be laid at your feet if they knew of this hasty scrawl.”

Bishop Carroll’s first visit to St. Joseph’s Valley, October 20, 1809 has already been mentioned. On the following December 14, Mother Seton wrote:

“MY DEAR FATHER:

A full and particular letter written you by the holy Mr. Nagot would have informed you of all our concerns since you left us: but, unfortunately one of our Sisters taking my pocket to wash without my knowledge, the poor letter with one enclosed to poor Louise was drowned and so spoiled it could not be sent. Since

1 Baltimore Diocesan Archives. Transcript in Archives of Mount St. Joseph, Ohio.
that time our Cecilia has been at the last extremity and Harriet these last few weeks also confined to her bed, which with the many etceteras of sick Sisters and children has made it almost impossible for me to acknowledge your last most kind favor and thank you a thousand times for the many indulgent expressions it contains.

I have had a great many hard trials, my Father, since you were here, but you, of course, will congratulate me on them as this fire of tribulation is no doubt meant to consume the many imperfections and bad dispositions our Lord finds in me — indeed it has at times burnt so deep that the anguish could not be concealed, but by degrees, custom reconciles pain itself and I determined, dry and hard as my daily bread is, to take it with as good grace as possible. When I carry it before our Lord sometimes, He makes me laugh at myself and asks me what other kind I would choose in the valley of tears, than that which Himself and all His followers made use of? There seems to be no intention of removing us to St. Joseph’s this winter. I have refused to give the least sentiment on the subject: there are so many difficulties in staying and dangers in going that unless obliged in obedience I cannot take it upon me. Your favorite Rose and Kitty are very well and even improved in health for sometime past — dear good girls they all take everything as it comes. All the Sisters vie with one another to make light of every inconvenience, — so, surely, the poor Mother must not lose courage. Pray for us, my (our) dear Father, as we do for you continually with the greatest tenderness.

Always most affectionately and devotedly your child in Xst. M. E. A. S.”

In a letter of condolence which she penned to him, on January 19, 1810, after speaking of his bereavement, she refers to the death of her sister-in-law Harriet, tells of

1 Baltimore Diocesan Archives. Transcript in Archives of Mount St. Joseph, Ohio.
the illness of many of the Sisters, and adds: “They are recovering — two have left their chambers, but I really began to think we were all going. I have been sick a few days, but am quite better and we are preparing to make a trial of St. Joseph’s house — if it is too cold we must return again. Our moveables are not very weighty. Do you bless us, do you carry us in your heart? I know you do and it is a great, very great comfort to us all.”

The Sisters suffered much during the winter 1809–1810, and during the following spring. Even as late as June 15, Mother Seton informed Archbishop Carroll:

“Your paternal heart will be glad to know that all goes quietly here. Mr. Dubois has been named representative of Rev. Mr. Dubourg and is making some exertions for the settlement of the establishment which gives a better appearance to things in general. The masons have nearly finished the lower part of the house but the work falls so heavy on our good Sisters who have stood it out the longest that every one of them now is afflicted with pain in the breast and side — for myself I am almost bent double: but this I only tell you as our chief Shepherd. Let all things take their course. Fortunately for us Mr. Dubois never thinks any sickness worth minding until the Doctor gives over and therefore every one keeps up with courage. Our school is very respectable and has increased to forty including the boarders.”

Again she wrote November 29, 1810:

“Most reverend and dear father:
Your kind message by Rev. Mr. Duhamel was a most affectionate reproach to me and the Rev. Bishops had told me you had heard I was sick — not so sick

1 Baltimore Diocesan Archives. Transcript in Archives of Mount St. Joseph, Ohio.
2 Ibid.

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tho’ as is imagined, being always well enough to be Mother about the house and in the school which is all indeed I am able to do. If now nursing the sick was in question, I should be obliged to be the patient instead of the assistant, but you will be happy to know that boarders come so fast that no one of us has time to be sick and you know how well our dearest Lord fits the back for the burthen—I need not tell you our consolation in receiving the blessed Bishops nor how many benedictions they poured upon us. We have been very sensible of this special favor.”

Father David was making preparations to accompany to Kentucky Bishop Flaget, who had not taken possession of his See after his consecration November 4, 1810, because he had no means of defraying his travelling expenses and Archbishop Carroll was too poor to assist him. Friends in Baltimore and other places, learning of the Bishop’s poverty, made up a purse, which enabled Bishop Flaget to take Father David and four other ecclesiastics with him to the Blue Grass State. Father David did not resign his charge at St. Joseph’s until shortly before his departure in May, 1811.

Hardships, self-denial, humility, charity, and fervor were steadily laying deep and solid foundations for the spiritual structure of the American Daughters of Charity. The rule to guide them was now to receive the careful examination and later the approbation of the head of the Church in the United States.

On December 5, 1810, Mother Seton wrote Archbishop Carroll:

“The Superior desires me to send the Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity which Rev. Mr. Flaget brought

1 Baltimore Diocesan Archives. Transcript in Archives of Mount St. Joseph, Ohio.
ST. JOSEPH'S HOUSE IN MOTHER SETON'S TIME

MOTHER SETON'S HOUSE ON PACA STREET, BALTIMORE
— as you have now leisure to consider them. They will go by Mr. White who has just sent us your letter for which I thank you a thousand times."

She wrote him again, on March 16, 1811, concerning the health of herself and Sisters and mentioned that Father David had urged Sister Rose to go to Baltimore.

"I imagine," she says, "that the Reverend Superior intends before he goes to establish the house he proposed without a school in order to leave this one to me for the exclusive purpose of education, which idea he suggested, when he was last here, to Mr. Dubois. I pray our dear Lord continually to bless all their endeavors for His glory and if He pleases to prolong my life, will be more than contented with the part assigned me here." 2

On the 13th of May following, she wrote:

"Most Reverend and Dear Father:

How unkind must my silence to you have appeared after the kind solicitude of your letter by Rev. Mr. Kenny, but the truth is I was afraid it might have been thought I wrote you on a question which discretion forbade my entering on. Your most valued favor by Mr. Woods now permits me to speak my heart to you as our Lord sees it, and He alone can know with what heartfelt sorrow I look back to that period when, if I did not act contrary to your will, I, in a manner, compelled you, in order to preserve peace, to accede to what your judgment and experience would have denied. The succession of afflictions which have followed this conduct, is my best ground to hope that our Lord has not abandoned me to my own folly and that your patience will not be exhausted by the continual troubles I have occasioned you. And, now, after two years' trial, experience has too well proved how ill I am

1 Baltimore Diocesan Archives. Transcript in Archives of Mount St. Joseph, Ohio.  
2 Ibid.
qualified to meet the views of the Reverend gentlemen who have the government of this house, who require a pliancy of character I would, for some reasons, wish to possess, and may eventually be the fruit of divine grace, but as yet is far from being attained. Your observation that our Reverend confessor has the whole labor of two offices is so true that he often finds himself much embarrassed. Being on the spot he sees things in a different point of view from those who are distant, consequently my mind must often be influenced by his opinion while my actions should concur another way. Rev. Mr. Dubois, an economist and full of details dictated by habits of prudence—Rev. Mr. Dubourg, all liberality and schemes from a long custom of expending. In spirituals, also, the difference is equally marked and their sentiments reflected from their habits. It is easy for you to conclude that between the two my situation would be truly pitiable, but I must abandon it to Almighty God, as it must be a very delicate point for you to decide, and I should be very unwilling to take the responsibility of having influenced you, and I open my heart on the subject only because I believe our Lord requires me to be explicit on it. Rev. Mr. Dubois on one point, has always had my preference as a Superior—he always and invariably recommends me to refer constantly to you, which is not only in the order of Providence, but the only safety I can find for the peace of my mind. How could you have expected, my Reverend Father, that the regulations of the house would have been concluded before the departure of the Rev. Mr. David, since his calculations are turned on the arrival of the French Sisters? What authority would the Mother they bring have over our Sisters (while I am present) but the very rule she is to give them?—and how could it be known that they would consent to the different modifications of their rule which are indispensable if adopted by us? What support can we procure to this house but from our boarders, and how can the reception of boarders sufficient to maintain it accord with their statutes?
How can they allow me the uncontrolled privileges of a Mother to my five darlings? — or how can I in conscience or in accordance with your paternal heart give up so sacred a right? My Annina having no longer the prospect of leaving me to fulfill her unfortunate engagement, and her mind perfectly settled in renouncing the world, tho’ not inclined to a religious life,—my duty to her alone would prevent my throwing her in her unprotected state in the hands of the French Mother, or force her to quit the house at the expense of her peace. Even if I had the courage to separate from her, her virtues and exemplary conduct would make it impossible of my will.”

It has been customary with many who have written of the affiliation of the Emmitsburg Community in 1851 with the French Sisters to affirm that Mother Seton always wished this union. Mother Margaret Cecilia George who entered Emmitsburg Feb. 2, 1812, always contradicted the statement. The above letter is proof sufficient of Mother Seton’s views on this subject and confirms Mother Margaret’s testimony. Bishop David encouraged the union, but must have changed his mind regarding the possible benefits, since he did not seek the alliance for the Community which he established in Kentucky about a year and a half after he left Maryland.

To the spiritual troubles which tried the heart and soul of Mother Seton, material annoyances also were added. Towards the close of the year 1811 we find her writing to General G. Harper,2 son-in-law of Charles

1 Baltimore Diocesan Archives. Transcript in Archives of Mount St. Joseph, Ohio. Anna was engaged in the spring of 1809 to Chas. du Pavillon, a graduate of St. Mary’s College and a native of Guadeloupe. On his return to the West Indies, through his mother’s influence, he broke the engagement with Miss Seton.

2 Robert Goodloe Harper was born near Fredericksburg, Va., in 1765. He served under General Greene during the Southern Revolutionary campaign, studied
Carroll of Carrollton, regarding her embarrassed condition. Mr. and Mrs. Harper were most devoted friends of Mother Seton and her Community and for many years entrusted to them the education of their daughters. After reviewing their situation and showing that the pensions of the boarders were required for the daily maintenance of community and school, she explains to him that the debts contracted for the building must be met and asks him how it can be done:

"Would Mrs. Harper be interested for us or is this an extravagant dream of female fancy? What is our resource? The credit of twenty poor women, who are capable only of earning their daily bread is but small stock, particularly when their flour merchant, grocer, and butcher, are more already in advance than they are willing to afford. If we sell our house to pay our debts, we must severally return to our separate homes. Must it be so, or will a friendly hand assist us, become our guardian protector, plead our cause of humanity, and be a father to the poor? The Reverend Mr. Dubourg has exerted himself continually for us and bestowed all he could personally give. From him we are to expect no more. What shall we do? How dare I ask you, dear Sir, the question?

Dear Mrs. Harper, tell your sweet nieces to look at the price of a shawl or veil, and think of the poor family of St. Joseph's."

Her appeal met with a generous response and the impending danger was averted. Various plans had been proposed for liquidating the debts, among them that Mother Seton should visit the large cities and solicit help. Bishop Cheverus wrote her opposing this last method:

law at Princeton, was elected a member of the National House of Representatives in 1794, and United States Senator from Maryland in 1815. He died January 15, 1825. Three volumes of his speeches at the American Bar have been published as specimens of gifted oratory.
"What if the bare necessities of life were often experienced!" said an old Sister describing those days, "We had little to eat but our appetites were so good everything tasted savory. Our gardener Dedderick, who had to work, got the best of all. I sat by Mother Seton at table and many times she ate my crusts. O she was a lovely woman, dear!" ¹

Father Cooper who had presented the land to the Sisters continued to aid them; his generous hand was ever ready to give. Mother Seton said to a friend, "(Mr. C.) lately sent us a barrel of honey, one of treacle of which we make much use, a box of Smyrna figs; one of raisins; one of prunes; and seventy or eighty yards of pelisse flannel, besides pieces upon pieces of India muslin for underwear—that was a good thought, you must acknowledge. He will never let us want what he can give. We never see him, or even thank him for his pure benevolence. Many strange beings there are in this world, dearest."² The only obligation Father Cooper laid upon the Community was for them to regenerate his native State of Virginia. He confidently hoped that Sisters would be sent there and laid this injunction on a Sister who told Mother Euphemia: "Never to refuse Sisters to Virginia; the Sisters must convert Virginia."

Sister Margaret George endeavored to realize this hope when she opened the mission in Richmond.³

Mother Seton's remarkable strength of character as well as living faith displayed itself through these years of interior trial. Wherever duty commanded her to go, whatever duty impelled her to say, there she went and expressed her views unflinchingly. Postu-

¹ Archives of Mount St. Joseph, Ohio. ² Ibid. ³ November 22, 1834.
lants were asking admission and Mother Seton knowing that the regulations were being discussed by many eminent clergymen, hesitated about receiving candidates until all had been settled. She expressed herself thus to Archbishop Carroll in a letter written on September 5, 1811.

"Most Reverend and dear Father:

I hasten by a very good occasion to reply to your favor of this morning relative to Miss Nelson for whom we have the utmost interest and concern knowing many interesting circumstances of her amiable disposition from her Sister, who is very much beloved at St. Joseph’s—but above all because she is one of your special children. Yet, for the moment and until our future arrangements are more settled or until you see the Rev. Mr. Dubois, perhaps it will be best to suspend the considerations of her admittance. That I am acquainted with most of the circumstances passed of late, you know. You, my most Reverend Father, know also everything that has passed from my first union with this house until the present moment,—temptations, trials, &c, &c.—and now I cast all at the feet of the Adored, placing every consideration and all my concerns in your hands as His representative, to decide my fate. The rules proposed are nearly such as we had in the original manuscript of the Sisters of France. I never had a thought discordant with them. The constitutions proposed have been discussed by our Reverend Director and I find he makes some observations on my situation relative to them, but surely an individual is not to be considered where a public good is in question—and you know I would gladly make every sacrifice you think consistent with my first and inseparable obligations as a Mother. I shall beg the kindness of Mr. Dubois to hide nothing from you of my dispositions and situation as he knows them and certainly as far as I know myself, they are known to him as to God."
Ever your obedient and most affectionate daughter in our Lord, M. E. A. S.\textsuperscript{1}

Archbishop Carroll replied to her September 11, 1811.

\textbf{HONORED AND DEAR MADAM:}

Shall I confess that I am deeply humiliated at being called on to give a final sanction to a rule of conduct and plan of religious government by which it is intended to promote and preserve, amongst many beloved spouses of Jesus Christ, a spirit of solid and sublime religious perfection? When I remember how many prayers, fastings, watchings, &c. were employed by the holy founders of religious institutions, to obtain light and assistance from the Holy Ghost to render their constitutions and rules adapted to the objects of their pious zeal, I am so sensible of my unworthiness, that I would certainly decline from the task, if I did not entertain a confidence that it may please God to bestow a blessing on the ministerial acts of the ministers of religion, whom he has constituted, to which they are not entitled, if only their private worth were considered. Under this impression, therefore, I shall and do now give my approbation to the constitutions exhibited to me by Mr. Dubois, after they shall receive the alterations suggested to and by him. You will know from him what these are: and it affords me great pleasure to learn that all the material points, on which a difference of opinion was thought to exist, have been given up by Messrs. de St. Sulpice, in their last deliberations. If they had not, I do not think that I should have approved the constitutions as modified in the copy thereof, which has been before me. Mr. Dubois has not exhibited the rules of detail and particular duties of the sisters; but these being matters of which yourselves and your Father-Superior will be the best judges, I commit

\textsuperscript{1} Baltimore Diocesan Archives. Transcript in Archives of Mount St. Joseph, Ohio.
you and them with the utmost confidence to the guidance of the Divine Spirit. I am exceedingly anxious that every allowance shall be made not only to the Sisters generally, but to each one in particular, which can serve to give quiet to their consciences, provided that this be done without endangering the harmony of the community: and, therefore, it must become a matter of regulation. I am rejoiced likewise to know, that the idea of any other connection than of charity, is abandoned between the daughters of St. Joseph and the society of St. Sulpice; I mean that their interests, administration, and government are not to be the same, or at least under the same control. This removes many inconveniences for you, and for Messrs. of St. Sulpice. No one of that body but your immediate superior, residing near you, will have any share in the government or concerns of the Sisters, except (on very rare and uncommon occasions) the superior of the seminary of Baltimore, but not his society. This, however, is to be understood so as not to exclude the essential superintendence and control of the Archbishop over every community in his diocese. Your own peculiar situation required special consideration, on account of your dear children. It seemed to me that only general principles for you and your family's case should be now established, grounded on justice and gratitude; and that special considerations should be deferred to the period when circumstances may require them. At present too many persons would be consulted and amongst them some who are incompetent to judge; and even they who are most competent, might find their most equitable provisions rendered useless by the changes produced in a few years. Mr. Dubois has been very explicit in communicating, I believe, whatever it was proper for me to know. On my side it has been my endeavor, when I read the constitutions to consult, in the first place, the individual happiness of your dear Sisters, and consequently your own; 2ndly, to render their plan of life useful to religion and the
public; 3rdly, to confine the administration of your own affairs, and the internal and domestic government, as much as possible, to your own institutions once adopted, and within your own walls. Your superior, or confessor alone, need be informed or consulted in matters where the Mother and her council need his advice. I shall congratulate you and your beloved Sisters, when the constitution is adopted. It will be like freeing you from a state in which it was difficult to walk straight, as you had no certain way in which to proceed. In the meantime assure yourself and them of my utmost solicitude for your advancement in the service and favor of God; of my reliance on your prayers; of mine for your prosperity in the important duty of education, which will and must long be your principal, and will always be your partial employment. A century at least will pass before the exigencies and habits of this country will require and hardly admit of the charitable exercises towards the sick, sufficient to employ any number of the Sisters out of our largest cities; and therefore, they must consider the business of education as a laborious, charitable and permanent object of their religious duty. I am, with esteem and respect, honored and dear Madam, your servant in Christ,

J. Ab'p. of Balt.”

In order that the Sisters might thoroughly understand their obligations, the rules and constitutions were submitted to them before final ratification. They were told that there was no obligation on them of abiding by these regulations, that they must exercise their own choice, that they were free to accept them or retire from the Community. In the early part of January, 1812, all but one accepted the Rules as drawn up by the Most Reverend Archbishop, by the Superior, Rev. J. Dubois, and M. Tessier, the Superior of St.

1 White, op. cit., pp. 309-12.
Mary’s Seminary. Immediately afterwards the Rules were again carefully examined by His Grace of Baltimore and the Superior of the Sulpicians and received final confirmation January 17, 1812, in the following words:

**CONFIRMATION OF RULES.**

"After having read the constitutions of the Sisters of Charity with great attention and approved of everything contained therein I have presented them to the most Reverend Archbishop Carroll for obtaining his approbation, and at the same time I have confirmed and hereby again confirm the nomination of the Reverend Mr. Dubois for Superior-general, in witness of which I have set my hand, on the 17th of January, 1812. JOHN TESSIER."

"I have read and endeavored before God, attentively to consider the constitutions of the Sisters of Charity, submitted to me by the Reverend Superior of the Seminary of St. Sulpitius and I have approved of the same, believing them to be inspired by the Spirit of God, and suitable to conduct the Sisters to religious perfection.

BALTIMORE, Jan. 17, 1812. JOHN Archbishop of Baltimore."¹

After this, His Grace, Archbishop Carroll, gave to Mother Seton the Rules and Constitutions which were to govern her and her Sisters. She received them with overflowing heart and always regarded them as a sacred deposit to be ardently cherished by herself and companions.

The end which the Sisters of Charity of Emmitsburg proposed to themselves was to honor our Lord Jesus Christ as the source and model of all charity, by rendering to him every temporal and spiritual service in their power in the person of the poor, the sick, prisoners, insane, and others in distress: to honor the Sacred Childhood of Jesus Christ by training the young to the love of God, the practice of every virtue, and the knowledge of religion, while sowing in their tender minds the seeds of useful knowledge.²

The education of the young, in general, did not enter

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² Archives of Mount St. Joseph, Ohio.
into the plan of life given to the French Sisters by St. Vincent de Paul, but it was the aim of the American Daughters as is set forth in Archbishop Carroll’s approbation quoted above:

“My prayers shall be yours in the important duty of education which will and must long be your principal and will always be your partial employment. A century at least will pass before the exigencies and habits of the country will require and hardly admit of the charitable exercises toward the sick sufficient to employ any number of the Sisters out of our largest cities; and therefore, they must consider the business of education as a laborious, charitable and permanent object of their religious duty.”

The object of the society having been defined, the spirit of the rule being perfectly understood by the Sisters, and the form of government thoroughly explained, the next step was the selection of the four principal officers to form the Council: — the Mother, the Assistant, the Treasurer, and the Procuratrix.

Archbishop Carroll wrote Mother Seton suggesting that the selection be conducted “with that spirit of charity and humility and entire submission to its event, and with that preparation by prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which would insure constant tranquillity and regularity.”

These dispositions were named in the constitutions as necessary to this important act and the Sisters (twenty in number) were fully aware of the sacred duty imposed on them. They made no secret of their wish to retain Mother Seton in the office which she had held from the beginning, but since the Community was assuming greater proportions and the spiritual advancement of the members would be so much increased by their new obligations, she felt in her humility that she
would be unable to discharge the duties of Superior. One of her companions reassured her by saying the qualities of a Superior are those of a Christian parent:

"Be a mild, patient, and firm Mother and you need not tremble under the burden of superiority. Jesus can never give you a task above your courage, strength, and ability. Don’t let uneasiness and fear appear so plain to the weak. You must at least be the moon, if the sun is too bright and dignified a character. The more gentle and modest light will suit our valley, in the growing fervor of your little company. I do not want you to dart the rays of the great St. Theresa: times, places, and circumstances change the order of this life."¹

All the conditions required by the constitutions could not be carried out at the first election, some of the Sisters not having been members sufficiently long, but all who voted had spent at least one year in the Community. The four officers were elected on four different days and their terms were arranged to prevent an election of the Mother and officers in the same year.

Mother Seton was the choice for Mother Superior; Sister Rose White, Assistant; Sister Catherine Mullen, Treasurer; and Sister Ann Gruber, Procuratrix.

Almost immediately afterwards, on February 2, they began a spiritual retreat and all were informed that a further novitiate of one year would be granted to test their vocation, at the end of which, all who wished would bind themselves by the prescribed vows. Many entered on this day, among them Sister Margaret George. On account of the straightened circumstances, the costume of the Sisters was not very uniform, their habits being made often from clothing they

¹ Archives of Mount St. Joseph, Ohio.
brought with them; still, they kept pretty closely to the
dress adopted in the beginning, except that the black
cap had been substituted for the white cap in 1809
shortly after they took possession of St. Joseph's
Valley. When the income of the house permitted,
black bombazette was introduced for the Sisters' 
habits. During the war between Great Britain and
the United States (1812-1815) that material could not
be obtained and black flannel being substituted has been
used ever since during winter and summer. ¹

On March 12, 1812, Mother Seton lost her beloved
Anna Maria, then Sister Annina of the Community.
This beautiful young lady in the seventeenth year of
her age had become an example to boarders and
novices. Having requested that she might die a pro-
fessed Sister of Charity she was permitted to make her
vows the day preceding her death, thus becoming after
her mother the first professed member of the sisterhood.²

On the morning of her death she asked her two younger
sisters, Catherine Josephine and Rebecca, to kneel at
the foot of her bed and sing her favorite lines:

“Though all the powers of hell surround,
No evil will I fear;
For while my Jesus is my friend
No danger can come near.”

¹ Archives of Mount St. Joseph, Ohio.
² Mother Seton mentioned to Annina Bishop Bruté's pleasure that she had
become a Sister of Charity. "Yes," she said, "I have somehow had to check a
rising wish to live ever since that day." "Why, darling," her mother answered,
"it seems you would rather have reason to fear, if you should live, the danger of
not keeping to your engagements." "Oh, to be sure, mother, if it depended on me;
but our Lord is so good, and has so long kept that thought in my mind, that suppos-
ing I lived the longest life, it would be but one moment to eternity, and short
enough in which to serve Him; and I do not believe there can be a better way in
this world to serve Him than as a Sister of Charity. This has long been my thought:
'Oh, our Jesus, how boundless is your goodness!'” Seton, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 127.
With streaming eyes and choking voices, anxious to please their dying sister, they began the hymn but grief compelled them to desist. The following day Annina was laid to rest in the “Woods.” The children of the village for years kept her grave covered with moss, lilies of the valley, and other beautiful flowers, loving to adorn the spot where slept the beloved and beautiful preceptress who had given them so many lessons in virtue. The death of her eldest child and one of such rare gifts was a severe trial to Mother Seton. In writing to a friend she says that if it were not for sacred obligations, “I should unconsciously die in her [Annina]: — unconsciously, for never by a free act of the mind would I ever regret His Will. ‘Eternity’ was Annina’s darling word. I find it written in everything that belonged to her: music books, copies, the walls of her little chamber, — everywhere that word.”

While Mother Seton was undergoing many trials of mind and body, her Divine Spouse, never forgetful of His beloved, was directing a very chosen soul to Maryland, one who would leave his holiest impress not only on the American Daughters of Charity soon to be his devoted charge, but also on the College of Mount St. Mary’s, on the clergy passing forth from the portals of this Alma Mater, and later on the people of the diocese of Indiana and the southwestern part of the United States.