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Mother Alberta Stockhof

Mother M. Alberta, formerly Teresa Stockhof, ex-Superior General of the Community of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate of Joliet, died of pneumonia at the Motherhouse on February 21, 1908, in the seventy-sixth year of her age and the forty-fifth of her religious life. She was the last of the four sisters through whose efforts the Community was called into existence.

Much has already incidentally been said in regard to the good sister whose departure from this life it is our painful duty to commit to the records of the Community, hence the writer of the annals, even though she had not been personally acquainted with this aged and venerable Sister, has been able to depict her as a humble and faithful religious during all the years of her convent life. We shall, therefore, confine ourselves to only a few more traits of her noble character which may serve to recall precious memories of bygone years of her convent life, with those who had been under her maternal guidance and at the same time also edify those who have never had the pleasure to know her.

Sister Alberta was one of those teachers who in former times with their limited knowledge of the three R's was expected to impart what she knew and studied hard to acquire that in which she was deficient. Her early years in the Community were spent in Mendota, Illinois and at St. Boniface, Chicago, Illinois. In the former place she was stationed two years, in the latter eight years, acting in both of these places as local superior and at the same time managing to teach successfully the ordinary branches of the parochial schools. It was simply marvelous to see her pupils advance on a parallel with pupils of

other schools whose teachers were Sister Alberta's superior in book-knowledge. Three of her first aspirants to the Community at Joliet assert that Sister Alberta had a way of making them gain knowledge indirectly which might have been coveted by the more learned and more experienced teacher.

In 1876 when by order of Bishop Foley of Chicago an election of a new Mother Superior was to take place, it fell to her lot to succeed Mother Alfred and to assume the full responsibility of that office. The trials she underwent during the brief time of her superiorship have already been recounted in this work. If ever an ex-superior greeted and welcomed the day when relieved from her obligations, it was certainly our dear Mother Alberta. She felt her inability to govern from the very day of her election to the day when she pronounced the formula of her resignation, but had, as is well-known to the Sisters, done nothing in the administration of the Community that could have been to her or to any one else a cause of regret. She placed all her confidence in God. She did the best she could under the circumstances, and God Who regarded the humility of His handmaid, attended to the direction of affairs.

Mother Alberta's term ending after one year, she returned to Saint Boniface, Chicago, where she had previously been engaged in teaching the elementary branches of the parochial school. On her return as superior she spent her time in assisting the primary teachers and in giving private lessons to retarded pupils. Being an adept at plain needle-work and to some extent in artistic stitching, she took special delight in utilizing her talents for hemming and embroidering articles appertaining directly to the service of God at holy Mass and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. No priest of a poor parish ever applied to her in vain for such articles.

In her intercourse with her subjects she was kindness itself, and in her weekly instructions to the Sisters, the favorite admonition of the beloved disciple was dominant. "Sisters," she would say, "let us love one another!" It has been said that she rarely omitted this injunction.

She continued to preside over St. Boniface mission until about the middle of November of 1896 when she was transferred to Joliet to enjoy the much needed rest she had earned by unceasing labor for God's dear little ones. One of her hardest trials at the Motherhouse, as she often remarked with regret, was that of being deprived of the joy she used to experience in listening to the Sisters as they related daily happenings of the school room. At the Motherhouse most of her time was employed in making scapulars ordered by the Sisters in the mission houses for first communicants. Many thousands of these neatly wrought articles were sent out and good Mother Alberta felt great satisfaction in being able to be of assistance to the teachers by furnishing them these devotionals, since she could no longer be engaged in actual work.

Having spent about twelve years at the Motherhouse, during most of which time she enjoyed the blessing of good health, she contracted pneumonia and became the victim of the disease after a few days of painful illness. When one of the Sisters, during the first days of Mother's illness sympathizingly wished she could suffer in her stead were it possible, the patient thanked her and said: "Then I should not gain the merits of suffering." She died as she had lived, a willing victim of suffering and of bearing the cross of her crucified Savior.