

Donaldsonville Chief.

Office in Crescent Place.

Saturday, February 10, 1883.

Gone to Rest.

Death of Sister Mary Austin Mudd, Superior of St. Vincent's Institute.

Sunday evening, February 4, 1883, at 40 minutes past 8 o'clock, the white soul of Sister Mary Austin, the venerable and well beloved Superior of St. Vincent's Institute, in this town, left its mortal tenement and took flight to the regions where dwell the spirits of the pure in heart. Though anticipated for a fortnight, the hour of final dissolution was none the less bitter to the loving companions, pupils and friends who gathered in sorrow about the death bed, or in the Institute chapel, where the body lay in state until the burial, or followed the remains of the lamented deceased to their final resting place.

The funeral took place Friday morning, and was one of the most imposing ever seen in Donaldsonville. The burial case was carried from the Institute to the Catholic Church and from thence to the cemetery uncovered, so that the cherished form of the dead Sister was visible through a large lace veil until the moment for depositing it in the tomb had arrived. The pall-bearers were Capt. R. P. Laidley, Capt. Jno. T. Nolan, Dr. J. H. Vandegriff, Judge Jas. Crowell, Messrs. Edouard Gaudin, Faustin Hanquet, Elie Melancon, Felix Lefebvre, Frederick Duffol, Victorin Melancon, Jr., Aime Richard and Ambroise Rougroux, and ten little girls clad in white accompanied the pall-bearers, holding in their hands white streamers attached to the handles of the burial case. The names of the little ones were Louise Mudd, grand niece of the deceased, Cecile Thivierge, Eugenie Vandegriff, Louise Vandegriff, Heloise Lemoine, Lene Weber, Lucy Prudhomme, Aggie Fooley, Emma Nolan and Clara Weber. Mrs. Fathers Cappens, Buder and Leaichege led the mournful procession, and following the remains were the Sisters and pupils of St. Vincent's, and a large concourse of people. The ceremonies at the church were very solemn and impressive. High mass for the dead was celebrated and Father Cappens pronounced a feeling eulogy in French, depicting the beautiful and useful life of the lamented Sister and recounting her deeds in the service of God and humanity. The Institute chapel and the church were heavily draped in mourning, the pupils bore banners, bouquets and wreaths, and the coffin was strown with fragrant flowers.

A very affecting scene occurred at the tomb when the solemn rites had been performed and the lid of the coffin was about to be secured in place. The Sisters of Charity, who had spent years in the companionship of the beloved dead, approached the tomb and one by one imprinted a farewell kiss upon the still, cold lips of the corpse. Many spectators sobbed, and there were few dry eyes in the large audience, as the coffin was closed and deposited in the vault prepared for its reception. In accordance

with her own request, Sister Austin was buried near the large cross standing in the rear portion of the cemetery, and the remains of several Sisters of Charity now repose in the grounds of the St. Vincent Institute will probably be transferred to the same spot at no distant day.

To one of the St. Vincent Sisters we are indebted for the data from which we write the following biographical sketch of the deceased: Mary Austin Mudd was born at Opolousas, St. Landry parish, La., the 19th of July, 1810, and was consequently 72 years and 6 months old at the time of her death. Her father was named Benjamin B. Mudd and her mother Eleanna Smith. At an early age she was sent to the Sacred Heart Convent, Urinal, Louisiana, nine miles from Opolousas, where she completed the curriculum and graduated with distinction. Endowed with every qualification for worldly enjoyment, she longed to consecrate herself to the service of God, but being the only daughter, she was obliged to remain with her invalid mother, and it was only after several years of tender nursing and devoted care that her mother passed away and left the earnest young Christian free to carry out her cherished purpose, which she did soon after, notwithstanding the pitiful protest and appeal of her affectionate and much loved brother. A singular circumstance in the career of Sister Austin is, that while on her way to the Mother House of the Sisters of Charity at Baltimore, Maryland, she stopped at New Orleans and visited Bishop Blane; when the holy prelate saw her he blessed her and said: "Go, my daughter, in peace, and return in joy for the salvation of your people." How truly has this prediction been verified! A few years afterward she was sent to Donaldsonville, and inhabitants of this place can testify to her devotedness and zeal during the 45 years she has spent here.

Nobly surmounting all obstacles and trials attending the foundation of the St. Vincent establishment, Sister Austin remained long at her post, but her health having failed, she was sent by her superiors to France, where she discharged important duties. On her return to America she came back to Donaldsonville with a heart full of love for her people. So great was this devotion and regard that when circumstances beset the removal of the Sisters from the town, she successfully exerted herself to have the Institute maintained, and to her we are indebted for the presence of the Sisters of Charity and the perpetuation of the St. Vincent school.

Sister Austin was taken ill two years ago, and during the long and weary months of suffering that ensued she was a model of resignation and holiness. For the past six months or more her diet consisted almost entirely of a glass of buttermilk a day. On the 23rd of last month she was attacked by a stroke of paralysis which rendered her unconscious, in which condition she remained until last Sunday evening, when she died without a struggle. We can conceive of no death calmer or more peaceful than hers. During the period of her unconscious and comatose state, water of lourdes was the only substance that passed her lips.

At the request of the Sisters of St. Vincent's Institute we express their warmest gratitude to

the people of Donaldsonville and vicinity for their kindness and attention to Sister Austin during her long illness, and especially to Mrs. Tolter, Mr. Cogdill and family, Mr. and Mrs. Bentley, Mr. and Mrs. Nolan, Mr. and Mrs. Park, Mrs. Thibaut, Mrs. Fooley, Mrs. John Comstock, Rev. Mr. Stuart and lady, and to Dr. Jno. H. Vandegriff, her faithful medical attendant, to whom Sister Austin bequeathed the keys of chapter she used forty years.

It is proposed to raise a fund by subscription for the purpose of placing a slab, appropriately inscribed, on the tomb of beloved Sister Mary Austin, and a list will be kept at the CURRY office on which those who wish may record their contributions. A suggestion has also been made that a chapel be erected in the Catholic cemetery near Sister Austin's resting place, where the customary mass for the repose of the dead may be celebrated on the first Monday of each month. Both are commendable objects, and their accomplishment would be a graceful evidence of the love and esteem which the people of this community bore Sister Austin in life, of the deep sorrow and regret with which they have viewed her death, and of the respect and veneration they entertain for her memory.

IN MEMORY OF SISTER M. AUSTIN.

BY THE YOUNG LADIES OF ST. VINCENT'S DAY SCHOOL.

A garland of sorrow for our saintly dead;
Love's offering of tears on her bier to shed;
Our hearts are crushed and our spirits down,
Since Death has entered our lov'd school home.
And tear-drop gush in waves from our eyes
As we think that our love is in the cold grave lies.
Oh, how we pray—our soul pleadings rose
To Jesus' sweet Heart—our refuge in woes.
At Mass, at Vespers, our prayers were the same,
Our pleadings were vain, the Death-angel came,
And murmured its fiat; her spirit flew hence
With Peace that will ever her faith recompense.
Slowly she faded, as the splendor of Heaven
Fades from the earth; a bright summer even,
Just as the Vesper star when day is closing—
The smile of an angel on her features reposing.
Oh Sister, sweet Sister, 'tis hard to resign thee,
With Death so peaceful and gentle upon thee,
Continue, sweet Angel, thy mission of love,
Protect and watch o'er us from Heaven above,
In vain do we list for thy kind words of truth,
Cheering our labors and guarding our youth,
May the path of love you so faithfully tread
Lead your fond children over onward to God,
But vain our attempt, grief's depths to reveal—
To put into verse what our breaking hearts feel;
Be mute, then, oh souls, the sad tear-drops tell
The emotions of anguish that now wildly swell,
And we murmur in tones that never shall cease,
Our love's sad requiem, a sweet "Rest in Peace."

A Card of Thanks.

THE SISTERS OF CHARITY of St. Vincent's Institute present this testimonial of unbounded gratitude to their worthy physician, Dr. Vandegriff, for his unremitting care and attention to their beloved Superior, Sister Mary Austin, during her long and tedious illness. The Sisters testify that it has been only by the skill of the Doctor that the life of their dear Sister has been prolonged to this date, and therefore tender him their heartfelt thanks.

SISTERS OF CHARITY,

Donaldsonville, February 5, 1883.