

Janet Erskine Stuart 1857 -1914



In November 1857 a new baby, Janet Erskine Stuart, was born at the Rectory in Cottesmore, the thirteenth child of the Rev the Hon. Andrew Stuart. Her mother was his second wife Mary Penelope Noel, a close relative of Lord Gainsborough. One of Janet's brothers was to become the sixth Earl of Castle Stewart. However Janet was destined to greater fame and influence in another realm. As a child she lived in a privileged household and travelled in Europe and over the years had both Swiss and German governesses.

As a young girl she moved away from the Church of England and by the age of 22 had become a catholic soon to become a nun in the Society of the Sacred Heart at Roehampton. It was here that her immense talents were recognised and she soon became the assistant to the Mother Superior Reverend Mother Digby. In a few years she had written a number of books, mainly on education, and on the election of

Mother Digby to Superior General in Belgium she become the Mother Superior at Roehampton.

With Mother Digby she travelled to Canada and the USA and her talents were recognised all over the world. On the death of Mother Digby in 1911 Mother Janet became the Superior General, the head of the whole Society of the Sacred Heart. Again Janet Stuart travelled the world but this time as the head of the Sacred Heart. All over the world you can see the remains of her work with schools and convents formed in every continent. She died in 1914 and is buried in Roehampton. One sad feature of her life was when she became a Roman Catholic she was no longer welcome to stay at the Rectory and never did.

A remarkable woman who led a remarkable life during remarkable times. A girl from a small village in a small county who was to encompass the world with her teachings and devotion, a lady who changes the lives of many and helped open the educational door for women.



The family traces its descent from Walter, High Steward of Scotland in the reign of David I, 1177 and, in even more remote times, they figure in their annals the Thanes of Lochaber and the Banquo of Macbeth. The witches' prophecy, that from Banquo should descend a line of kings, began to be fulfilled when Robert, the sixth in descent from Walter the Steward, became King of Scotland in 1370, on the death of his uncle, David Bruce. It is from the third son of this Robert, that the Earl of Fife and Menteith, was created Duke of Albany in 1398

They fought in the Holy Land, were the founders of great abbeys, as Paisley an offshoot from Cluny which Walter the Steward established in his own lands, and endowed magnificently, but in less peaceful spirit they raided the Border and were heroes at Bannockburn and Flodden.

For generations they were in the full light of the King's favour. Titles and position were showered upon them. Two Dukes of Albany ruled Scotland in succession, as regents, during the long captivity in England of their royal cousin, James I.

On his release in 1423 the fortunes of the family waned. Almost the first act of the liberated monarch was to imprison the Regent Albany along with his heir Walter. They were executed at Stirling in 1424, ostensibly on the charge of high treason, and property and titles were confiscated to the Crown.

Several grandsons of the Regent, children of Walter, escaped to Ireland ; while the youngest, an infant at the time, found refuge with his mother in Scotland. He was known later as Walter Stuart of Morphie, and, as his elder brothers eventually died without issue, the claims of the family centred in his descendants. For the marriage of his mother, Janet Erskine, with the heir of Albany, a dispensation had been necessary. The document in which Pope Martin V granted it is preserved in the Vatican archives. It attests that ' the Holy Father being humbly supplicated on the part of his dear son Walter Stuart and his dear daughter Janet Erskine, has authorised the marriage/ the suppliants being within a forbidden degree of kindred.

In the reign of James II the exiles returned to Scotland, and were once more received into the royal favour. The head of the house was created Lord Avondale, a title exchanged for that of Ochiltree in 1534. But the times were troublesome, and after many vicissitudes the third Lord Ochiltree alienated his Scottish title and possessions, and the family passed, for the second time, into Ireland in 1610, where they had become possessed of a large grant of forfeited lands in Tyrone. This laid the foundation of a castle and village, now the market town of Stewartstown. Later on Stuart Hall was built on the Lower Eary, and is the home of the family to-day.

In 1618 the King, solicitous for the preservation of the fallen family in something of its former dignity,' created Andrew ' late Lord Ochiltree, Lord Stewart, Baron of Castle Stuart.' Two centuries later the Baronetcy of Castle Stuart was raised to an Earldom. Robert, the second Earl, had three sons, of whom the youngest, Andrew, was Rector of Cottesmore. Canon Stuart, as he became later on, was twice married. By his first wife, Catherine, daughter of Viscount Powerscourt, he had seven children, the eldest surviving son of whom succeeded to the Earldom in 1914.



The first Mrs Stuart died in December 1845, and some three years later, in April 1849, Canon Stuart married Mary Penelope Noel. By this marriage he had six children, three sons and three daughters, of whom Janet was the youngest born in 1857. Her mother's family was of Norman origin, and came over to England in the train of the Conqueror. It is said to be still represented in Normandy in the 'de Nouel' family.

In the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary, we find the Noels sheriffs for Rutlandshire, and representatives of the county in Parliament. Edward Noel, Viscount Campden, and his son Baptist were faithful adherents of Charles. Charles II rewarded the fidelity of the family by creating the next peer Earl Gainsborough. The title lapsed in 1798, through the failure of male heirs, but the estates passed to Gerard Noel Edwards, the son of the last Earl's sister. By his marriage with Diana, Lady Barham, whose father was at the head of the Admiralty when Trafalgar was fought, Gerard Noel had fourteen children, of whom the eldest became the first Earl of Gainsborough of the second creation, and the ninth son, Leland, became Vicar of Exton. He married Mary Foljambe of Osberton Hall, Notts. It was the second child of this marriage, Mary Penelope, who married Andrew Stuart in 1849. Of the twelve children who had preceded Janet in the rectory nursery only seven were living in 1857 : from the first family, Theodosia, John, Richard, and William, and three of her own brothers and sisters, Horace, Beatrice, and Douglas.

Description of Cottesmore of that time

Cottesmore is one of those quiet old-world Midland villages, full of charm, that are found in the hills and woods round Oakham. Its church is among the most beautiful in Rutland, the oldest portions date from Norman times, the twelfth century. The rectory, a grey stone building, with high-pitched gables and mullioned windows, stands close to it, its walls overgrown with lichens and ivy. The scenery of Rutland, though not grand, has a beauty all its own, and is typically English, with rich meadow-lands, bordered by hedgerows, overgrown with flowers, and dotted with stately trees ; and densely wooded districts, the remains of the great forests of former days, still recalled in the names of the country round about. In the north and west there is a circle of low, flat-topped hills forming a link with the central highlands. They are clothed from base to summit with magnificent trees and luxuriant evergreens.

To the east the hills slope down to join the 'low fen lands so full of mystery.' Probably nowhere within so small a space can so much beauty and so

great a variety of scenery be found. Blue flowers are characteristic of the little county. In spring, the woods are carpeted with blue-bells, so thickly that ' the deep azure gives a distinct colour to the landscape/ while in summer the bright blue of the flax lights up the hill sides. Countless wild flowers, among which quaint orchis predominate, find their home in its woods and fields, and ' make Rutland a garden of delights, a paradise for children and lovers of flowers.

All the country is given up to farming, corn-growing, cattle breeding, and the villagers, it is said, still keep the manners of their forefathers. The quiet and stillness of nature brood over the little land and make it a happy home for birds.



The Rectory

Among these brothers and sisters one, at least, destined to a special place in Janet's life, must have more than a passing mention. Theodosia, or 'Dody,' the eldest sister, was a singularly attractive person. From her extant letters there appears to have been a great similarity between her and her youngest sister. True and unassuming in all relationships, singularly modest in her estimate of herself, she was a centre of love in the home circle. A keen sense of humour saved her from the exaggerations into which her ardent nature might have led her. Long before her due time she won that reverence which is generally given to age and experience, without losing the endearing qualities of youth. She had, as she expressed it, a 'darling best friend,' to whom she poured out all her thoughts, in a weekly correspondence, extending over many years. This was Lady Victoria Noel, the youngest daughter of the Earl of Gainsborough.

The two girls were almost of the same age. They had many tastes in common, and Exton Park, the seat of the Gainsboroughs, a distance of only two miles from Cottesmore, became like a second home to Theodosia Stuart.

On January 4, 1859, Mrs Stuart died. Her last words were to entrust her little children to the care of their sister, who was henceforth to be a mother to them. In the following letter we see the spirit in which she entered on her new life.

Cottesmore : February 1859. I have had so little time for letter writing since we came back that I have not before been able to answer your last. It was so painful being here at first. When we came back the desolate feeling was hard to bear. The house so empty without that bright dear face, that gave it its life and attraction. But the goodness of God ! It is so wonderful. He sends something to alleviate the trials most felt, and I do feel what . . . love He has shown his leaving with us those four darling children [Horace, Beatrice, Douglas, and Janet, aged nine, seven, five, and one]. They are so comforting, and though my responsibility is great I feel so thankful to God that He has thus laid it upon me. ... I cannot help loving what He has given me to do ... for she left it to me . . . and her last words are constantly a help. ... I did not know how much I loved her till she was taken away. . . .

The nursery at Cottesmore was ruled over by Swiss nurses and nursery governesses, so that the children learnt French as they learnt to speak. One of these gives us a picture of the child in these early days.

Mademoiselle Janet etait une enfant tres facile, toujours bonne, gentille et aimable. Je ne me souviens pas de l'avoir jamais vue fachee ou de mauvaise humeur. Elle apprenait facilement et a su lire le francais de bonne heure. Nous nous sommes tres attachees l'une a l'autre, elle faisait tout ce qu'elle pouvait pour me faire plaisir : elle etait tres pratique et aimait toujours etre occupee ; ainsi apres la promenade, c'est elle qui pliait et mettait de xxxx les effets, et le matin pendant que je la coiflais elle voulait toujours faire quelque chose pour moi, lire, par exemple, ou meme de"coudre quelque chose : elle aimait beaucoup s'occuper des autres pour leur faire plaisir ou pour rendre service et ne pensait pas a elle-meme. Elle avait un caractere tres decide et ferme.

French to English translation

Janet was a child very easy, always good, nice and friendly. I do not remember *l'avoir ever fachee* or bad mood. She learned easily and was able to read french early. We are very attached one and other, she did everything she could to make me happy: she was very practical and loved always be too busy, so after the walk, one who folded and placed in her cot her effects, and in the morning while I the coiflais she always wanted to do something for me read, for example, or even to "sew something: she loved a great deal more to please them or to to serve and did not think was herself. She had a very decided character and firm.

'When I was six years old. Having heard of the resurrection of Lazarus, and that miracles equal to that could be worked by faith and prayer, I resolved to raise my mother from the dead, and escaped from my nurse into the churchyard to perform the miracle. Having prayed with all my might, I shouted as loud as I could :

'Mama, come forth/ without the slightest doubt I should see the grave open at once. The disappointment was very great and left a seed of doubt in my mind that bore fruit later. The constant evenness of disposition, of which her nurse wrote, was not a mere

natural gift, but the result of deliberate choice ; for the gentle, unobtrusive child had already turned her mind to things seemingly beyond her years. One thought [she writes] at this age, six, stands out as a landmark for me. I saw my brother and sister, a little older than myself, one day fighting like two cocks, with scarlet faces. I did not think it wrong, but it gave me a great contempt for such outbursts, and I made a resolution, that come what might, I would never lose my self-control like that. With



one or two exceptions, I kept the resolution, but it would have been better for me to have broken it a hundred times, for it extended gradually to all exhibitions of feeling, and I went in for being a stoic, except with my father, to whom, as he afterwards told me, I gave everything except my confidence.

This was indeed true. She poured out upon her father all the love of her deep, strong nature, and he returned it fully. She was his Benjamin, his favourite child, and, as she grew older, his constant companion, sharing in all his interests and, as she could, helping him. There was no jealousy among her brothers and sisters at this special love.

They recognised it indeed, but understood and approved of it. For Janet was never self-assertive. Others might mark her out for favour.

The Father

Canon Stuart,

Andrew, has been described as ‘ a gentleman of the old school/ conscientious, upright, honourable, very charitable to the poor, and somewhat stern. Very gifted, and a man of many interests, all the time he could spare from his parish duties he gave to farming, gardening, and writing, A man of keen humour, he loved a good story, of which he had an inexhaustible number. His first family had been brought up in stern, even Spartan fashion. But to his younger children, and especially to Janet, the shy, somewhat cold man gave more than a father’s love. ‘ I had an old-fashioned, ceremonious home training/ she said later. ‘ Are homes more ceremonious if there is no mother ?’ Every evening the children gathered round their father to say good-night, and as the day had been, so was the warmth of the embrace. If ‘ very good/ his arms were round them, and they might hug him with all their might. If the report was only ‘ good/ a kiss upon the forehead was all that was allowed ; while the sad class of the ‘ naughty ‘ were only admitted to kiss his hand. This was a punishment keenly felt by Janet. ‘ A parent’s momentary coldness/ she wrote, ‘ reaches further into the sensitive soul of a child than the loudest expostulations of lesser authorities/ High-spirited children, full of life, and enjoying great liberty, scrapes were not of infrequent occurrence, and the foreign nurses were often bewildered at the escapades in which the young ladies joined. ‘ But it

is not ladylike/ they would expostulate. To which the elder sister would quickly reply : 'If I do it, it becomes ladylike' reasoning to which they were at a loss to find an answer. Attached to the Cottesmore living were some ninety acres or more of glebe land, and this Canon Stuart farmed himself. He was keenly interested in agricultural work, and an excellent judge of horses and cattle.

Janet often stood by while her father talked with the farm hands and inspected the animals. Nothing was lost on her ; not only did she get to know the various breeds of cattle, and varieties of corn, but she became an expert judge in these matters. Later on, when she saw a horse, or was questioned about the worth of an animal, her father expected her to give its good or bad points without hesitating. Those who know say she was rarely mistaken, and the knowledge gained thus early was never lost. This intercourse with the country people gave her a great admiration for farmers, ' strange, silent, observant, reliable people, who know their own business to perfection,' she wrote later, and her childish admiration led to the desire to imitate.

She would be a farmer too, and live as they did. And so she would gravely ask for tea without milk, and for cheese, fare which these friends seemed unaccountably to prefer. The farmers, on their side, delighted in the child's visits, and, as she grew older, they more than once consulted her about their affairs, even writing to her when she was away from home to tell of some 'heifer of no note ' to be got rid of; of some cow of special



breed to be secured; or to give her details about the year's crops. *'She's a great loss to the agricultural world'* said a farmer, when he heard she had left Cottesmore. In the case of most children these walks would have been merely chances of play and fun, but to Janet they were a serious matter, and finding nothing in her home library from which she could learn a farmer's business, she began, at the age of nine, to save from her little supply of pocket-money, that she might take in an agricultural journal. So earnest was she in her study that before long her father entrusted her with his farming accounts, and for many years she followed up every detail about the property.

It was in these early days that she began to gather that store of quaint images and observations which seemed so marvellous in later years, and gave such a touch of life and humour to all her conversation. Her memory enabled her to reproduce anything once heard, and her power of attention to detail let nothing escape her. A donkey and two ponies were the cherished possessions of the Cottesmore children, and her first riding lessons were given to Janet by her brothers in the rectory fields. The child knew no fear. Indeed, she confessed later on that physical fear was unknown to her, and she soon became a splendid horsewoman. She also learnt to drive, and while still a little girl was, trusted with the reins.

On weekdays, lessons, farm duties, and various calls of home kept her very busy, but Sundays were all her own. In the mornings she taught in the Sunday school. This was

a great pleasure, surpassed only by the joys of the afternoon, when she was free, to organise matters as she chose. Every second week she had three successive classes, for the older children of the village. One of these, known as the Young Men's Class. A surviving member (1920s), one of the seven sons of the Cottesmore schoolmaster, who themselves all became schoolmasters, writes :

I first knew Miss Janet as the teacher of the Young Men's Class at Cottesmore, and as I was preparing for the teaching profession, she took special interest in my career, she also having studied school method and organisation. She lent me various text-books on the subject, which contained her own copious notes. Her lessons for the class were evidently prepared with the greatest pains. She was a frequent visitor at the village school, making the older children her chief care, observing and studying the methods employed. She had a vigorous personality, overflowing with health and spirits, entering thoroughly into every duty she undertook, obtaining respect and attention from all her pupils, upon whom her influence left a lasting impression for good.

On alternate Sundays she walked across the fields to Barrow, a hamlet a mile or so away, where she had brought a little Sunday school into being, she played the harmonium at the service which her father held, and then walked home with him. The love of teaching was an inborn taste. In her frequent visits to Scotland she made friends with an old Scotch teacher, of whom she speaks in her book, written many years later, on the Education of Catholic Girls.

In 1878 Dody died at Bournemouth, where she had spent the last few months of her life. This sorrow affected Janet deeply. In 1866 the old Earl of Gainsborough had died and Exton passed to his heir. The second Earl had become a Catholic with all his family. Intimacy, therefore, was no longer encouraged between the children at Cottesmore and their cousins, for Canon Stuart and his family were Low Church Anglicans, and Mr Leland Noel, his father-in-law, held the same views. There were two sisters in the new family circle at Exton, Lady Constance and Lady Edith Noel., the latter became a Sister of Charity in 1878. As they grew older, the cousins, though not intimate, met from time to time, as complete separation was naturally impossible.

Janet was invited to stay with her.' The permission to do so was granted readily. ' We had a long talk on the first day/ says Janet, in her account of her conversion, ' and it came upon me like a flash of lightning, that it might be in the Catholic Church that I should find the "last end " and the truth, about whose very existence I was doubting/ It was a ' system which, as a result of her surroundings, had not seemed to her, so far, worth while examining. The desire of truth was so strong, however, that she would leave no stone unturned in her search for it.

After this, visits to Exton became more frequent, and Janet got all she wished in the way of Catholic books. In the autumn of 1878 Edith Noel entered the noviceship at Carlisle Place, leaving her cousin engrossed in her arduous search. In the month of November or early in December of the same year, another friend was brought across

her path. I was staying at Exton [writes Mrs Ross, a daughter of Sir John Ross of Bladensburg] when one afternoon the Bellinghams told me that Janet Stuart was coming to dinner, and that they wanted me to talk to her. 'She is very much interested in religious questions.'

Before leaving Mrs Ross invited Janet to come and see her in town, promising in the meantime to do anything she could for her by correspondence. The beginning of 1879 saw the Stuarts in London on a visit to their cousin, Mrs Kinnaird. Janet had not forgotten the invitation, and, a few days after her arrival, found her way to Curzon Street. One January afternoon in 1879, Janet went to Curzon Street with her Swiss maid, Charlotte, to meet a Jesuit priest called Father Gallwey.

She told her father of the interview, and that she was thinking seriously of entering the Catholic Church. He was upset, and begged her not to meet Father Gallwey again. They then went down to Cromer. Here her father made his last attempt to keep Janet back from the Church. He asked her to write for him a full statement of her position, and her reasons for being a Catholic. Some days afterwards he told her that he had sent it to Mr Gladstone who was then in his seventieth year, the 'annus mirabilis.'

Janet went to Curzon Street and explained to her friend that she must see Father Gallwey again, for unless he could remove certain doubts and trouble of mind, which had been aroused by the visit to Mr Gladstone, she could not become a Catholic. A few days later, on the eve of the First Friday, March 6, 1879, Janet Stuart was received into the Church. The ceremony took place at the Altar of the Sacred Heart in Farm Street.

She never lived with her father and sister again. Canon Stuart thought that he, as Rector of a parish, ought not to allow a Roman Catholic to live in his house, especially one whose influence was so great among his people. His course of action was determined by a straightforward, conscientious desire to do right. He suffered cruelly from it, for his love for his child was in no way lessened by her action. He wrote to her constantly, saw her whenever he could ; from time to time she visited Cottesmore, staying for the purpose at Exton ; and he provided generously for all her wants.

The three and a half years following her reception into the Church were spent, in trying to serve two masters. She gave the day to fishing and hunting, and often the greater part of the night to prayer and study, to fit herself for the life she meant to lead. But what was it to be ? As yet she hardly knew 'In London I was a little more pious, and visited the University Hospital, and a big Workhouse pretty regularly. Father Gallwey piloted me with consummate tact, like a born fisherman, never letting me feel the line till I turned my head to him, at the same time never letting go, and sometimes hinting that I was born for greater things than horses or fish. He never smiled upon my plan of going out to teach Catechism to the Kaffirs, or of taking a village school. But he would never say explicitly that he leaned towards anything else, and he made every move come from me. I had vague thoughts of religious life, and a sort of conviction that I should be a nun some day, but it always seemed not to be thought of at the moment.'

The first few months were spent in London. In July 1879 she went for a short visit to Exton, and from there re-visited her own home, and the villages, farms, woods, and

fields, which held so large a part in her heart. The joy of seeing all again was damped by the knowledge that her action was not understood by those whom she loved best. After a few days spent with her cousins, she returned to London, and then went over to Ireland, staying first at Rostrevor, before going on to Dunlewy House for the grouse shooting. It was a wild, out-of-the-way place. There was much game in the neighbourhood, and excellent salmon fishing. Janet soon became an expert in this art, and studied the ways of salmon with keen interest, the leaps between the lakes especially delighted her. The winter was spent in London, going down for the day, or sometimes for a night or two, to Leighton Buzzard, where her friends had a small hunting-box, and kept their horses. Here Janet was in her element. Though she had lived in the heart of the hunting country, she had never hunted as a girl.

In the summer of 1880 she went abroad, visiting Paris, Dresden, Munich, and Oberammergau, for it was the year of the Passion Play. The party then went on to Zurich and Interlaken ; several weeks were spent in Switzerland.. A short stay was made in Berlin, and they then returned to England by Brussels. After spending a few days at Exton, she went on to Dunlewy for the shooting, and returned to London for the winter.

She spoke of visits to several convents, of her attraction to the Society of the Sacred Heart, because of its name, and of her fears that it did not do enough for the poor. Some months later, in the spring of 1882, Father Gallwey sent this paper to the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Roehampton. It bore no signature, but was, he said, written by one who was thinking of joining the Order. Reverend Mother Digby, the Superior of the House, and Mother Henrietta Kerr read it with a few other Mothers.

Father Gallwey wrote: *Tell me sometimes when you write whether you are attracted more at present to the invisible Trinity or the Humanity of Our Blessed Lord. I have before now shown you how the Canticle Benedicite can be applied either to God Our Father and Creator, or to Our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Try the effect of indulging your heart in prayer, and tell me the result. . . . Fishing is an admirable exercise for your purpose ; you are alone and you have a little distraction for your mind, though not much. I only wonder how, with your heart for creation, you can bring yourself to kill a fish. God bless you, your letters comfort me very much.*

Walking in town she wrote, *you cannot read, but you can pray, so let that be God's time . . . sometimes let your mind rest quietly in the thought that God is with you, within, around, above you, most intimately with you, and walk as you would walk in recollected happiness by the side of Our Lord Himself.* Another turning point in her life was now approaching. Thoughts of religious life were taking deeper possession of her, but the obstacles appeared insurmountable, and it seemed neither right nor possible to inflict this further pain upon her family. God had not as yet spoken the last word.



The story is told very shortly in her own words : *One day, it was May 6, 1882, when I was walking up through Regent's Park to the Helpers of the Holy Souls, I was thinking of religious life and saying to Almighty God, ' O my God, I should like it very much, but you see it is impossible to think of it at present ' and then and there, standing by the side of a bed of blue hyacinths factum est ad me verbum Domini and I saw it all. When I went into the convent chapel, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, and the nun who was on the prie-dieu was replaced by another as I came in. I asked as a sign that, if the ' word ' was from God, He would put me on the prie-dieu instead of the nun who had just come, and almost immediately she left the prie-dieu and came to beg me to take it, saying she felt too ill to stay so I did not doubt further. Blue hyacinths remained to her for ever after the symbol of a great revelation. They were a fitting one, for her mind and soul and life were full of flowers and their fragrance. She always kept this anniversary, and if possible liked to look at blue hyacinths on that day, but 1882 had been a late year and in May they were often out of flower.*

Janet let Father Gallwey know that she would make the retreat he was to give in the following July at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Roehampton. *' He expressed himself as "so grateful " when at length I accepted his invitation.'* It was her first retreat [writes Mrs Ross], and I, knowing too well what it would lead to, tried to prevent her from going. *I love you very much/ she answered, ' but I love God more.'* So together we drove down to the convent on the afternoon of July 22. Father Gallwey had no doubt as to what the issue of the retreat would be, and said to one of the nuns : *' Tell Mother Digby that if Miss Stuart offers herself for the noviceship, she is not to be refused. Tell her, she is the most complete person I have ever met. After forty years of ministry in London, she will know what that means.* So the retreat began, a strenuous eight days, for Father Gallwey was at his best and in all his vigour.

'Could I face the idea of never mounting a horse again it was what cost me the most. Could I for God brace myself to accept life in thirty-three acres of ground ' She little foresaw then that the call would one day lead her to girdle the earth in her travels. At the opening meditation of the Second Week of The Kingdom of Christ. Janet was in extreme desolation. But she held on through the long hour praying with all her will, and in spite of the great darkness made the closing prayer, the offering to follow Christ the King.

On the seventh day of the retreat Miss Stuart asked to see Reverend Mother Digby, and offered herself very humbly for the Society of the Sacred Heart, hardly daring to hope, as she said, that she would receive a favourable answer, for then, as always, she was *' humble, and little and nothing at all in her own eyes/ ' With all my heart I bless you for it, ' said Father Gallwey, when I told him of the final decision, and opening the book of Esther, he read the touching passages in which Mardochai speaks of himself as watching Esther from the time she went in and out as a ' little one/ ' And he walked every day before the court of the house in which the chosen virgins were kept, having a care for Esther's welfare, and desiring to know what would befall her/ ' That is what I have always felt for you from the beginning, and what I have done in your regard. It was perfectly true, no other words than those of Scripture in his mouth could so well have expressed it. On the last day of the retreat [writes Mrs Ross], *Janet came to my**

room and told me of her resolve to enter the Society of the Sacred Heart on the following September 8. We had a long talk about it, and cried over it, at least I did. My chief recollection of that day, July 30, was the extreme desolation of Miss Stuart's friend [writes Mother X]

The next day, the Feast of St. Ignatius, the two friends left Roehampton and went at once to Dunlewy. A fortnight was spent there visiting all the old haunts which neither was ever to see again, and Janet took up her favourite sport of salmon fishing. * *I could not bear to return here without you/ said her friend.* ' On leaving Donegal they went to Knock to visit the shrine of Our Lady, which Father Gallwey had much wished them to see They then returned to London, and Janet went down to stay at the rectory at Cottesmore for a few days. It was the first time since her conversion. Those who know how strong was her love for home can realise what the visit meant to her, and how great was the parting wrench. The worst, indeed, had been done three years before, but the last look at all she held so dear was not without its touch of keen anguish. There was a large family gathering in the old home, as two of her married brothers were there with their wives

On September 6th she returned to London, and the next day drove down to the convent. Another stage of her journey was accomplished. Noviceship : that life which ever remains a mystery and a rock of offence to the world. ' Can those outside ever understand it ?

REVEREND MOTHER DIGBY and the sub-mistress of novices received the new postulant. It was with mingled feelings of awe and joy that Janet stood at last within the shelter of those walls on which the light of God had seemed to linger ; no longer there as a visitor for a moment, but to stay as a child in her home. She was taken to the chapel of the Sacred Heart and kneeling before the altar made the offering of her life on the spot, where, thirty-three years later, she was to rest from her labours. Then rising she went to begin her new life.

On November 13, 1882, the Feast of St. Stanislaus Kostka, she took the habit. Father Gallwey performed the ceremony, choosing for the text of his sermon the words from the Collect of the Mass. In spite of the differences between them, a deep and life-long affection sprang up between Janet and Mother Digby, each recognised in the other the gift of God, and to the end it remained more that sacred love between mother and child, rather than the tie of friendship based on intuitive understanding and sympathy. A keen eye for discovering the gifts of God in those



CHAPEL OF THE SACRED HEART, ROEHAMPTON FATHER GARDY, S.J. MOTHER STUART, MOTHER DIGBY.

around her. She was soon satisfied that in Sister Stuart the Society of the Sacred Heart had a subject capable of the greatest things, and she trained her accordingly.

It was not without some trouble,' writes a fellow novice, ' that Reverend Mother Digby succeeded in training Sister Stuart to disregard her tendency to be silent, to remain in the background, to wait for others to take the initiative. In the noviceship, at first, she scarcely talked at all in general assemblies ; and when she understood that she ought to, it cost her very much to raise her voice, nor did she always seize the moment when it came.' For long after she entered, as she herself confessed, recreations were a real trial.

In 1882 Mother Henrietta Kerr's life was drawing to a close, and, Mother Digby named Janet, the new novice her 'errand boy' and secretary, and most of her leisure went in this employment. About the same time she became sub-secretary to Mother Digby, and was given a little room near hers. From this time on, for some twelve years, she was her constant companion. Her position in the noviceship was thus an unusual one. '*That it did not cause the slightest shadow of jealousy, speaks much for her holiness and tact*' writes the surveillante of the novices at the time. Her genuine love of common life was evident to all. '*Two traits stand out in my memory after all these years. The first was the eagerness of Sister Stuart, during any temporary absence of Mother Digby, to make up for lost chances of such good things as scullery work and other household occupations. I was then surveillante, she necessarily applied to me for the gratification of her lowly ambitions. The second was her life-long and deep gratitude for a reproof which it fell to my lot to make to her. I always attributed to this her marked affection for me and her continual reiteration of what she owed me.* In her very last letter from Ixelles in July 1914, Janet said : " You know that ever since you were my surveillante in the noviceship, and still more my Mistress of Studies, I have been very sensitive to your approval, and the judgment you would form of anything that I might produce ! You would be surprised if you knew how much I remember of things that you said, even casually. What dear and happy days."

In September 1883 Sister Stuart took up these new duties. Her previous training and education had been well suited to fit her for the work before her. She was already competent to take the master's chair. Such an idea was far from her mind. ' In those early days/ writes a fellow novice, ' she seemed to think that everyone knew a great deal, reflected much, and gave all they had to God, like herself. In this spirit of a disciple, she sat again upon the class-room benches. ' change from the free out-door life told on her, and her health appeared to suffer, so that for a time her Superior insisted on rest even at the expense of prayer and Communion. A favourite penance of hers was to remain a considerable time without changing position, and this she often advocated in later years as a means of strengthening nerve and will. This was characteristic of her. Mere negation never appealed to her, it was too akin to death ; restraint and denial were to set her powers free. Her love of beauty made her value perfection of detail in all things. In this spirit, and because with true humility, she held life and talents as a trust from God, she had cultivated every gift and power He had given her.

And with this ideal she stood upon the threshold of religious life. Then it seemed to her that even this must go, that there was perhaps something inordinate in her desire

for self-culture. God seemed to hold out His hand, and in her childlike, trustful nature there could be no denying Him. He might ask for what He liked, the costliest gift, He must have it. In the early months of her noviceship [writes a fellow novice], this trial seemed at one moment almost beyond enduring. Sister Stuart imagined that she must change into another being. She fixed her eyes on a novice, utterly unlike herself, but who appeared to her to have attained the desired goal. For a moment, perhaps, her path became obscured, and it was hidden from her eyes that what she needed was merely the perfecting of her own nature and not the assuming of another. The result was a painful struggle. On December 27, 1882, when, at the end of a famous sermon preached by Father John Morris, S.J., in the convent chapel on the words, 'Possumus I Blessed be God, we can !' the choir stood up ; Sister Stuart, who was in the tribune, was so much overcome that she could not sing a note. Why, none of her sisters knew. But the costly self-surrender had been made. Years afterwards she gave her mistake as an example of the delusions into which beginners are apt to fall.

From the first she realised the ideals set forth in the Schools of the Sacred Heart, where the class is a little family, of which the mistress is not only the teacher, but the mother, to whom nothing that concerns the welfare of the children should be indifferent. In September 1884 [writes one who was then a child at school].

Her standard was very high, and she patiently tried to raise us to it. . . . She never found fault with us on the spur of the moment, sometimes waiting until the last few moments at the end of class, when the warning bell had rung, sometimes till the next day. Once she waited for a week, when the whole class had been in fault. . . . She often gave us questions to think over (our ages varied from twelve to fourteen), and she wished each one to write a very short answer, however crude.

Another child wrote; *I had a great idea of her learning since the days when she taught me to read. For a time, I was constantly in the infirmary, and busy as Mother Stuart was, she never missed a day coming to see me. She was very gentle and had the instinct of what would comfort or relieve. From the first the children respected and loved her ; some instinct told them that here was true worth. ' She seemed to bring with her an atmosphere of peace From the first she sought, as she herself expressed it later on,' to give personal worth to each child ; worth of character, strength of principles, anchorage in faith. Loving the children, and longing to fit them for their inheritance, yet she never overstepped the bounds of what could or should be asked of them. No dreams for her own perfection, no too eager strivings for the death of self, were allowed to cloud her vision in dealing with them. Childhood should be perfect childhood, as later she would seek in women perfect womanhood. Her special mission seems throughout her life to have been to the rank and file ; to raise and strengthen the average person, above all in religious life. Her joy was to find the vein of pure gold in the most unpromising ground, and in its existence she firmly believed. This, her life's work, was begun now in the school, where every child was looked upon as worthy of the best she had to give.*

Very few years had passed before Sister Stuart, gentle, unassuming, retiring as she was, had become one of the ruling spirits at Roehampton. And so it was, even in the presence of so strong a personality as Reverend Mother Digby, herself a ruler and

leader, of whom it has been said, ' she ought to have been a man.' She too yielded to that charm which none could resist, and bowed, with true humility, before what she recognised as a superior faculty of insight and an almost prophetic power of intuition, a woman's gift, which went so surely and swiftly to the end. She followed so successfully that self-effacement with her was the most simple, natural and attractive thing in the world. One sister on her return to Roehampton, after an absence of some time, to find how completely Sister Stuart's views and ideas (she was then only an aspirant or young professed) were adopted by Reverend Mother Digby

In September 1888 Sister Stuart reached the Mother House, then in Paris, in company with three English nuns, to begin the six months of second noviceship in preparation for her final vows. On February 12, 1889, she made her profession in the chapel of the Mother House, and the next day returned to Roehampton. She was immediately named sub-mistress of novices, and took over the greater part of Reverend Mother Digby's work with them.

A few months after her profession a great sorrow befell her in the loss of her dearly loved father. He had been in failing health for some time, and had resigned his living at Cottesmore in 1888. As Rector for over forty years he had won the respect and love of all, and especially of the poor, to whom he had always been a true friend. He died at Smedley on September 19, 1889, and was buried in his old church, where so many he loved were already resting.

In a paper written in 1903 by Janet, in which the ' way of viewing life one fictitious character appears, ' A Gentleman of the Old School.' In describing him, Mother Stuart drew her inspiration from her own father. He had lived . . . with full acceptance of the conditions of life . . . knowing neither crags nor chasms . . . never entering upon pathless wildernesses . . . a singularly tranquil career. . . . He took his day as it came, and all in the day's work. His manner of living was simple, direct, unperplexed . . . the life that one might envy if one did not know it to be impossible. It is a gift to some, but to others not allowed. Ruling life by a few first principles perfectly grasped, and the whole man held in silence before them, he sees one end. he sees one or two or three luminous peaks, and he makes for these leisurely and imperturbably. . . . His hands are quicker unto good than those of many a fretful spirit. . . .

Her seven years of training were now over ; God's work had been surely done. My seven years are ended ! What grave lessons I have learned ! How nearly, often and often, I have unlearned them all, . . . To-night the deepest beat in my heart is gratitude. I am thankful that I was spared, thankful that I was guided, thankful, above all, that I was controlled. Now sometimes a sweetness now, as a master-craftsman. Mother Stuart was about to begin the great work of her life ; teaching others to manage their own souls.

On her return from probation, as already said, she was named Sub-Mistress of Novices, an office which she held for three and a half years. In September 1892 Reverend Mother Digby, finally made them over to her care, as she herself was no longer able for the work since a severe illness in 1890. Less than two years later, in August 1894, Reverend

Mother Stuart succeeded Mother Digby as Superior at Roehampton, when the latter was named Assistant General, but she still retained the office of Novice Mistress.

In addition to the resources of the sportsman and the naturalist, Mother Stuart owed much of her power of training to a long and patient psychological study of women. In the words which she put into the mouth of the Benedictine Abbess of Whitby, St. Hilda, in an address which she supposes her to give to her young nuns, Mother Stuart epitomises much of her teaching in this matter. ‘ Trade with the gifts God has given you. Bend your mind to holy learning that you may escape the fretting moth of littleness of mind that would wear out your souls. Brace your wills to action that they may not be the sport of weak desires. Train your heart and lip to song which gives courage to the soul. Being buffeted by trials, learn to laugh ; being reproved, give thanks; having failed, determine to succeed.

She wished the novices’ spirituality to be very simple and free from exaggeration, and she possessed the art of saying the right word. Her explanations of the Rule and duties of religious life, given in the frequent instructions to the novices, were most beautiful and full of heavenly teaching, and all things seemed possible to those who listened to her. Another time she directed all their energies towards the love and practice of poverty. She established a confraternity of Poverty in the noviceship, She wrote a manual for their use, with a short Catechism on the practice of Poverty, and the 16th of each month a special feast was held to honour the ‘ Lady of St. Francis.’

The Congregation for the election of the new Superior General was to meet on July 8. On July 13 Reverend Mother Digby left Roehampton, and ten days later a telegram announced the election of Reverend Mother de Sartorius as Superior General they then had to choose an Assistant General ; one new member was required for the council; the votes fell on Reverend Mother Digby. Two days later the Superior of the Australian Vicariate, Reverend Mother Vercruysse, arrived in England, bringing with her letters nominating the new Superior who was to be Mother Stuart. The ceremony of Mother Stuart’s installation took place on the evening of August 17. In January 1895 Reverend Mother Stuart was summoned to Paris for her first visit as Vicar ; she thus had the consolation of spending a few days with Mother Digby. In the following March, Mother Digby returned to England for some weeks, and Mother Stuart accompanied her on her visits to Brighton, Hammersmith, and Carlisle.

A Convent of the Sacred Heart had long been asked for in Scotland, and as a good opening offered itself at this time to the Society, in Aberdeen. The opening of the new convent took place in November 1895. On April 30, 1895, Mother de Sartorius was struck with her last illness. The sorrows and trials of her short generalate had been too much for her, and she died on the morning of her feast day, May 8. Mother Digby was elected Superior General on the following August 25, the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. On her return from Paris, whither she had gone for the election, Mother Stuart continued her work as Vicar, visiting the houses of the Order in England and Ireland. Each year saw her at the Mother House for a week, to give an account of her stewardship. In 1897 she paid her first visit to Rome where she had an

audience with the Pope. July 1897 saw the beginning of a friendship which was of great moment in her life. On the Feast of the Visitation that year, the newly appointed Bishop of Southwark, Dr. Bourne, visited Roehampton.

In May 1898 she was again in Paris, for the Superior's retreat, but returned to Roehampton. After being with Mother General for a few months she was to be in America then two years after her return from North America, she set forth again on a missionary journey to visit the houses of the Order in the West Indies and South America, and this time in the position of authority.

There were many interests in her life at this time. Foremost among them were the educational, questions of the day in England and the work of God's Church in the world. Her practical interest was shown by the foundation of a missionary school at Armagh. Difficulties from within and without brought this venture to an untimely close in 1903. It was a great disappointment to her, but it is characteristic of her that no word as to the final reason for this.

The year 1899 brought a great joy to Mother Stuart, the consecration of the world to the Sacred Heart. 'It is the greatest act of my Pontificate/ said Leo XIII to the Bishop of Lie'ge. Let us say together thank God that we have lived to see the whole world consecrated to the Sacred Heart by the Holy Father ; In 1900 the Society of the Sacred Heart celebrated the centenary of its foundation. Her nomination as Superior had withdrawn Mother Stuart from direct intercourse with the children, but it had greatly increased her power of working for their good. She began in the summer of 1898, just before setting out for America, the series of conferences on educational matters, which were continued, with a break of two years, until 1909. In all, there remain the detailed notes of some sixty-two lectures. They cover a wide field, touching not only on matters obviously connected with the life of a school : discipline, work, culture, but many others. A large volume could also be filled with the notes of her spiritual conferences. Some three hundred in number, kept in the archives at Roehampton, were all, from 1898, written in her own hand.

For twelve years December 31 was a day of spiritual delight for all. It was during these years, too, that she began that extensive correspondence which holds so large a place in her life. The great work of Mother Stuart in the world was that of her spiritual influence. Brought into contact with many thousands of people during the thirty-three years of her religious life, there ever radiated from her a sense of the presence of God; she was to those in touch with her a living witness to the truths of faith. It is in her spiritual letters, her letters of direction and friendship, that this aspect of her life is most fully revealed. The difficulties dealt with in them are those which are the common lot of struggling humanity ; difficulties of faith, of hope, of charity; worldliness invading the inner sanctuary; laziness and cowardice in the labour of life; sorrow, pain, weariness in well-doing, and above all discouragement.

In August, 1898, Mother Stuart left Roehampton in company of Reverend Mother Digby, to begin the first of the many long voyages of her life. The letters written to members of her community enabled us to follow her through the various stages of her journey. On board the *Dominion*, August 14 and 17, 1898. They record a meeting with whales and icebergs, but are otherwise wholly occupied with details destined to allay the anxiety of those who, with reason, dreaded the long journey for Mother Digby. On August 20 the *Dominion* reached Montreal, and the travellers drove out to the Sault au Recollet, seven miles from the city, where there was a convent of the Sacred Heart. The next few weeks were spent in Canada, brought the travellers to Halifax. The next morning Mother Stuart was in the chapel at a quarter-past five, and from that time, until she left, she was the living personification of the Rule. . She showed a wonderful familiarity with the trees, grasses, and wild flowers ; even the pebbles, shells, and sea-weeds. In Chicago, which was reached in the beginning of October, there were two houses of the Society to be visited and the next halt was at Cincinnati in Ohio. Still going west, Maryville, a short distance from St. Louis, Missouri, was visited, and for the next few weeks the travellers found themselves in the scenes of the early days of the Society in America. St. Louis, Fleurissant, St. Joseph, St. Charles.



On April 29 the two Reverend Mothers left America and arrived at Roehampton on May 12. On Reverend Mother Digby's departure for Paris a few days later, Mother Stuart resumed the quiet home life with her community. The real history of the next year and ten months was within in the hearts and souls of her children. But this peaceful life was not to be for long. On January 10, 1901, she received a letter from the Mother House nominating her to visit the houses of the Order in the West Indies and South.

The early part of her journeys were somewhat frustrating for after visiting Cuba she was unable to continue to South America without first taking a voyage to New York as no ships were available that were going South. One letter said 'We are coasting down the ports of Peru in a beautiful ship, but she is behaving like an omnibus, for we make fifteen stops on the way. Valparaiso is our sixteenth station. The Andes come right down to the coast, only the lowest and last spurs. Lima is a most delightful and interesting house, full of holy Jesuit memories. There are numbers

of Christian Chinese in Lima ; in the cemetery their epitaphs are both in Latin and Chinese. the trains oblige us to spend Sunday at Santiago. . . . Valparaiso in itself is not very interesting, though prettily placed. Our houses of course are always interesting, and travelling by land after so much by sea is quite a novelty. Part of this journey is said to be very beautiful, so far it is only pretty, It was a great pleasure to see novices again at Santiago. Of course I have seen a few lay-sister novices, but not the flying virgins of the choir. Santiago itself is not so very interesting as a town, except that it is Santiago de Chile. We have the real Andes in the back-ground of our view all day, beautiful snow-peaks in the sun, and you are all on the other side of those Andes and beyond.

We started at six-thirty A.M., with three horses abreast, an outrider leading a fourth horse, which was to be added as soon as we got outside the town, as four are not allowed within the city limits. When we had gone about an hour's distance from Talca, the pole broke. I must say that I have never in my life seen mud before, even in Louisiana.

Throughout her travels in South America Mother Janet wrote long letters describing the countryside, which was of great interest to her, and the many communities that she met. A few days later the great lighthouse at St. Nazaire. After a week spent in Paris to give an account of her mission, she returned to England on September 23rd. Vicar General of Southwark said ; ' A woman of remarkable gifts of mind and heart, Mother Stuart, in many cases, would not impress people in the first stages of acquaintanceship. All her powers were so disciplined, so well under control, that a casual, unobservant visitor might easily come away without in any way realising the wonderful wealth of mental endowment that lay concealed under that calm and patient exterior. A key to Mother Stuart's power was her humility in its most attractive form and was the groundwork of her life. And from this rare possession came that impression of restful peace, that free and pliant dependence on God's will, that wonderful power of pleasing, of being listened to, of being loved.

The years which followed her return from South America were those which saw the complete development of all these powers, and brought her strong personality to its full height. Roehampton under her rule, during the years that followed, was an ideal home. An indefinable charm drew all hearts to Mother Stuart. There was in her something of that grace and delicacy of finish which we find in the great women saints. The simple conviction of her own lowliness made it impossible for her to be exacting with anyone. Gentleness and gratitude marked all her dealings with her neighbour. Charming everywhere, she was undoubtedly seen at her best in the heart of her own community. She had the splendid quality of justice of mind. How few are really just in their dealings with those under their authority. It is easy enough to be kind to persons congenial to us, even to be patient with their shortcomings ; but hard to be just all round She succeeded in being even-handed in her treatment of all. Her strength was in her love, and this thread of gold ran through all her life. It was said that her faith and hope and charity were perfect, and this was indeed true. It was these great theological virtues which stood out like shining lights in her life, throwing radiance round her and revealing God.

She said herself that from the day of her Baptism, on her reception into the Church, a doubt on matters of faith never crossed her mind. She positively loved and gloried in the dark things of faith, as throwing her more completely and more blindly into the arms of God. She comes back upon this again and again in her writings. Her charity was so unfailing and so universal that, to explain it, many have believed she made a vow never to refuse a kindness, little or great, if it were any way possible to grant it.

She seemed to consider that her position, as Superior, entitled her to be a servant to all, and she carried out this office so beautifully that she made her service of others a joy to them as well as to herself. Casual wishes expressed in her presence and perhaps scarcely adverted to again, were found fulfilled. A tone of regret in the voices of those she knew was enough, their unexpressed desire was satisfied. There is probably no exaggeration in saying that she never wasted a minute; she was always working, and she had such command over her mind that she could concentrate at once on anything she wished to do. Letters from Rome, from Austria, Egypt, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and Canada contain vivid impressions of the varied types of character, and of the influence of environment. She had a quick eye for all the salient features of a town and its people, and a ready sympathy of imagination. Her letters had a wonderful freshness and charm about them. Monsignor Brown who had received many, writes : *Her style of speech was never diffuse, her mind was very concentrated, and this quality showed itself in terseness, directness, and simplicity of language. Her written language is equally clear and concise.*

The book by her on the ' **Education of Catholic Girls** ' is an admirable example of luminous yet concentrated writing. But it is perhaps in her private correspondence that her gifts reveal themselves most fully. When giving work to her secretary, five minutes would suffice to give the answers to half a dozen important letters. Mother Stuart not only valued time for herself, but she had the greatest respect for other people's time. It never entered her head to keep anyone waiting, no matter whom.

Mother Stuart was always ready to discuss the commonplaces of life with those who sought her counsel and help; she never betrayed the least sign of the mental arrogance that sometimes unfortunately goes with great intellect. Many of her books were written in the hours she could get in the morning of one day each week. A second book was written on her journey round the world, and only in the earlier sea-voyages of that journey; it was written, as someone expressed it, 'by an extraordinary economy of time'.

Though she helped people most efficaciously according to their needs, she did not carry them, nor relieve them of their own share of the work. She insisted on the personal responsibility of each one to tend as far as possible to excellence in things

mental, moral, and spiritual. One pupil wrote ' *there seemed to be but one way to become an artist, and thus realise the great desires and designs which my parents had . Mother Stuart knew all this. Our first interviews always ran on music. But little by little another note was touched, and then suddenly it dawned upon me that I had to exchange my musical career for a religious one*'.

On one of her many journeys she turned out of her way unexpectedly to visit a house

not on her itinerary. One of her former daughters was there, and, it so happened, in great distress of soul. After a long talk, which proved a new point of departure for the latter, she said : ' Reverend Mother, I think God brought you here for me.'

Vicar General of Southwark said' *' A woman of remarkable gifts of mind and heart, Mother Stuart, in many cases, would not impress people in the first stages of acquaintanceship. All her powers were so disciplined, so well under control, that a casual, unobservant visitor might easily come away without in any way realising the wonderful wealth of mental endowment that lay concealed under that calm and patient exterior'*.

A great deal might be written about Mother Stuart as an Educator. Shortly after her election as Mother General, a Cardinal in Rome, speaking of her, expressed his opinion that there was no one like her alive at the time, then pausing for a moment he added . Perhaps there are two in the world. Her views and theories on educational matters can be very fully studied in her two books published in 1911 and 1914.

The Education of Catholic Girls and her second book, ' The Society of the Sacred Heart/

A character sketch of a Religious Order devoted to the education of youth, where she says : What stands by us in life is, after all, discipline of mind, habits acquired, the power of steady application, and such knowledge of first principles as will enable new knowledge and experience of any kind to find its right place and true proportion in what has been already acquired. The years 1894 to 1911, during which Mother Stuart was Superior at Roehampton, were years of warfare in the educational world. Mother Stuart succeeded in steering her course through the troubled waters of controversy, that without yielding anything of principle, she adopted what was necessary in the new ideas, and brought the school at Roehampton to an acknowledged supremacy in its own line . This was fully recognised in the inspections held by the Board of Education and other bodies.

She never forgot to be gracious, and preferred that criticisms should be proffered as questions rather than as laws. To read well aloud and to write good English were arts which Mother Stuart tried to foster. The latter was, she said, the best all-round test of general culture. As one great means of learning to read well is to listen to good reading, for several summers in succession she selected the best from Wordsworth, Tennyson, Dante.

Reading in every sense held a very high place in Mother Stuart's estimation never read but the best ; but she confessed three years before her death that she had ' just discovered how much she had lost by not reading more slowly. She said 'We should not give ourselves up wholly to the author, or put all our trust in the written word, but use our own judgment constantly. Examine, compare, learn from books, but do not think that each one calls for some final decision on our part. Rather use books according to the idea of the author.'

Mother Stuart became a class mistress, giving courses of lessons to the novices in 1908-1909, and in 1910 to some young nuns who had been sent to Roehampton for their studies. The greater number of her lessons in both years were devoted to the teaching of English. No detail was too small to escape her notice. The method of

keeping a study journal, the division of time, the choice of books, the visits to the different classes. All was arranged . and she told us ‘ that she would reserve to herself the pleasure of giving us a weekly class in English composition’. After three of these meetings she was called to Rome. And we supposed our classes would be indefinitely postponed, but no, she left a written list of subjects. Each week we were to go at a fixed hour to hear the new title, write the essay and send it to Rome, and each week brought a set of corrected papers in return. This continued for nine weeks.

LAST YEARS AT ROEHAMPTON 1902 to 1911

These were the years of the great exodus of Religious Orders from France. From the forty houses of the Order closed there, some three hundred Religious found their way to England. Beginnings were often difficult, and few knew a word of English, but Mother Stuart did all she could to smooth the path, studying the needs of each arrival individually, that she might, as far as possible, send them to places which would best suit them and where they would find work congenial to their aptitudes and even to their desires. Many new houses were opened in England to meet the need of the moment, some of a temporary character, as ‘ refuges’ others to become the schools of the future. In this way a convent was founded at Leamington, in what had been a boys’ college. Whether from like causes or not, the girls’ school succeeded as little as the boys’, and has since been transferred to Tunbridge Wells, a change which Mother Stuart desired but did not live to see accomplished. In July 1903, Goodrington House, Paignton, became a Convent of the Sacred Heart.

The year 1907 was a sad one for the English Vicariate. For reasons connected with the general government of the Society, Reverend Mother Digby decided, with regret, to divide the Vicariate into two parts. Five houses were thus removed from the jurisdiction of Mother Stuart, to the great grief of all. At the beginning of 1908 the first house of the Society was founded in Japan, and just one month earlier another had been opened at Bogota.

Early in 1910 the serious illness of Reverend Mother Digby filled everyone with concern. But in answer to the most fervent prayers, the shadow on the dial was moved back and fifteen months granted as a respite.

No picture of Mother Stuart’s life at Roehampton would be complete which did not speak of her loving care for those who were ill or suffering. In her own home when yet almost a child she had shown this womanly instinct, and her father spoke of her as the ‘ best of nurses.’ ‘ How I grieve,’ he wrote to her when she was a novice, and her tears fell fast upon the letter, ‘ that I can no longer share in those loving attentions you now pour forth on strangers.

Mother Stuart was a constant visitor in the infirmary. She would go up three or four times a day, taking with her each time something of interest a flower, a poem, community essays The last years at Roehampton saw a great development in Mother Stuart’s sphere of influence outside the limits of her Order. As she went through life,

she had a message of sympathy and understanding for many whose call led by widely different paths. Many persons of the world sought her help and claimed her as a friend. Some of the greatest of these friendships were with bishops, priests, and nuns of other religions.

On August 27 Mother Stuart was elected Superior General, as all, except herself, had foreseen. From henceforth Mother Stuart belonged to the whole Society, and for life. Though Roehampton would still have the largest share of her love, the very reason which secured this privilege would necessitate that it should have the smallest share of her presence. On September 21 Mother Stuart wrote her first circular letter to the Society : in it she announced that she was about to return to Roehampton for a few days, to be present at the ‘ second funeral service ‘ for Mother Digby.

Roehampton : October, 1911.

MY DEAR MOTHERS AND SISTERS,

The last things one wants to say are better to write than to speak. I do not want to go away without telling everyone what a joy it has been to see them again, how I thank God for it, and what a happy memory it leaves me. We all felt rather choked, when the first ceremonies for our dearest Mother General took place, that I had to be absent and God was all the time planning for us these beautiful days which were ten times more precious to us. Is not His Providence always better to us than our best thoughts ! We have seen it once more let us never forget it. For my own part I shall never forget September 30th it was such a finished picture of our life on earth the prolonged tossing and beating up against an angry sea ; the long, mysterious loss of time waiting at Dover, turned back to reflect still longer when we thought we were off so like purgatory to our waiting souls and then the arrival and the welcome, and ah! the dear faces that I had pictured appearing one after another as we shall see those who have gone before ; and then the heavenliness of the chapel and our moments of adoration and thanksgiving before the throne. Wasn't it perfect, a thing of beauty and joy to be ever remembered !

Another joy was to see how souls had grown in the months that have passed, and how convincingly they felt that it had been a great time in life one that they would not for anything have missed and they are without doubt stronger and greater for it. The pain of these things will pass, and all the rest will endure. We know God better and we are more His own by reason of all this. And now we must go on again, each one to the duties which contain for us the Will of God and the means of growing in His service and love. It does not matter what, nor where we will take it as it comes. And if the sea of life is angry and troublesome for our navigation, we shall bear in mind that the harbour lights will surely appear one day, perhaps soon, and we shall be in port.

If I had to sum up what I chiefly want to say as to the future, to each one

it would be, I think, this : Think glorious thoughts of God, and serve Him with a quiet mind. I think that includes my best wishes. May He bless you all.

Janet Stuart arrived at the Mother House on October 17 19 11 to begin her new life.

For the next Year as the Vicar General she was for ever visiting the abbeys and colleges throughout Europe , all the time writing letters of her travels describing the colleges and the people she met. Even during this exhaustive period she was always in touch with Roehampton remarking on how she missed them and looked forward in receiving their letters. . . . *Another letter from you this morning, you are too good. It is always a joy to see your handwriting. Letters from Roehampton are always put down at the bottom of the pile and I tell myself after the fashion of the nursery, ‘ When you have eaten the rice pudding you shall have the strawberries.’*

In 1910 MOTHER STUART had to visit Rome where she hoped, to be kept only two or three weeks ; but nine weeks passed before the business which had called her there was concluded. She wrote *Rome is getting terribly modern, but its variegated smells still savour of the past, and must have been the same very far back smells of spring growth, rain, hay-blossom, garlic, and the mysterious Roman smell.*

During this time she wrote the first chapters of her book on the Education of Catholic Girls

In 1912 she was to visit Spain and its associated islands. All this during the Spanish civil war with all the discomfort and difficulty of travelling, with some journeys taking over ten hours which normally would have taken only two to three. Although little is mentioned of the strife itself.

JOURNEY ROUND THE WORLD, 1913-1914

Egypt, Australia, New Zealand and America

At the time no suspected that this would be Mo0ther Stuart’s last world journey which was to end in Belgium during the outbreak of the First World War. It was an overwhelming programme, but nothing daunted her ; and no one seemingly was more fitted to accomplish it. But, though she little knew it, only three years and eight weeks remained of her working day, and of this she spent six hundred and seventy-two days in visiting the houses in Belgium, Holland, Alsace-Lorraine, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Italy, Sicily, Malta, Spain, the Balearic Isles, Egypt, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Canada, and some in the States and the United Kingdom. One hundred days were spent on sea, and one hundred and one convents were visited. She saw individually some four thousand seven hundred Religious, also many Bishops, priests, educational authorities, as well as countless friends of the Order.

No Superior General had as yet seen Australia. Their founders had nearly all gone out from Roehampton, Of the one hundred and twelve choir Religious in the vicariate she knew at least ninety personally On October 4, 1913, she left Ixelles en route for Trieste, where she was to embark for Alexandria on the 17th. The days on sea were not to be wasted. Before she left Brussels a friend had asked Mother Stuart to write a book on ‘ The Society of the Sacred Heart.’ It was destined to be one of a series treating of the

spirit and work of Religious Orders of men and women, and was to form part of a new Catholic Library but in the end it was to be her last gift to her own Order. The first copies were printed the day after her death. On her travels she took only the minimum of luggage, with only a small Willesden canvas bag for each of the nuns, and a hand-bag, and Mother Stuart's was mostly full of books, and a fresh relay was ordered to meet them at Sydney.

On November 5 Mother Stuart embarked at Port Said on the Orsova. From the outset she established an order of day, which she and her companions followed regularly in all sea voyages. The mornings till nine were given to prayer. Then followed work reading, study, writing ; from two to five interesting reading aloud in English, French, and German. Then the evening was given to prayer and recreation.

It was during these mornings of quiet work that Mother Stuart wrote the greater part of her book. On December 1st Mother Stuart landed at Melbourne. Four houses had to be visited in Australia, two in Melbourne and two in Sydney. During this time Mother Stuart writes lovingly about the sites of Australia the Houses and people she visits but all the time she makes references to Roehampton.

Here is a story she sent back to England. *A native Australian of the race that is considered so stupid was seen in one of the country churches praying, absorbed to all appearances, for two unbroken hours. Then the priest went and asked him what Prayers he was saying and he said, ' Jesus, Mary' ; it was all he knew. Think, what a prayer.*

The ship German Lloyd, left Sydney for Tokyo on February 7, 1914, with a Chinese crew officered by Germans. This Mission belonged to the Fathers of the Sacred Heart, and within its great enclosure were two convents of nuns. A few days later the Coblenz entered the magnificent approach to Manila. A forty-eight hours' stay at Hong Kong was the last pause on the road to Japan. On March 10, Kobe was reached, and Tokyo the following day. The Mission was on one of the islands and had a great enclosure, which included a church all made of zinc, as was the Bishop's house where the Fathers lived with him, and their lay Brothers. They were Fathers of the Sacred Heart, all German except the Bishop, who was French. They had great workshops and cocoa plantations. There were German Sisters of the Sacred Heart with whom they stayed who had the half-caste schools of girls, and for the half-caste boys, and a dispensary, etc., and a Convent of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary who were French, Dutch, Australian, etc. They had a native school for girls, one hundred and thirty boarders, the youngest sixteen months old ! They stayed till they were married. They were most sensibly managed, for they lived as much as possible in the native style, no beds, only a blanket to roll up in on the floor, their food mostly coconuts and bananas, so that they were not unfitted for the life before them. They were not at all like Australian natives, but a much finer race, perhaps Malay, but no one quite knew. Their build and walk and attitudes full of dignity, but unfortunately all who are not Christians are (cannibals).

From a letter; *The German Government are doing all they can to put down cannibalism, but of course they cannot get at the people in the interior of the islands, and twenty miles from the Mission it goes on as before. As they go through the wood from station to station the Fathers are always in danger. The Bishop told us that he happened to ask his favourite*

altar boy, Angelo by name and disposition, how long it was since he had tasted human flesh, and he said quite simply Yesterday

In Japan Mother Stuart found many of her former novices, and those who had worked under her in England. They had left her, not so many years before, scarcely daring to hope to meet again. The joy of the reunion was all the greater that by their position they were so far removed from all they held dearest, and surrounded by a spiritual atmosphere. Her arrival awakened interest outside the convent walls, and the education authorities asked her to visit the State establishments. She did so, having in view the more perfect adaptation of the educational scheme of the Order to the needs of the country. She saw in this way the High School, the Women's University, the Higher Normal School and that of the Peeresses.

When she was about to leave Japan, Dr. Mikami, Professor of History, and the Historian of Japan, asked her to write an article on what she had seen, to be published in some English magazine. The result was an article in the Month for July 1914, entitled 'How Japan Educates Women'

Mr. Naruse's aspirations the then head of the woman's university, aimed at higher education to reach the young women of Japan by the foundation of a University specially organised for them. This last point appealed very particularly to Mother Stuart. She questioned if Japanese women were not on wiser lines than their English sisters, establishing their own University and University system, instead of attempting to graft themselves on to those systems especially designed for men.

The University offered Collegiate and Post-graduate Courses. Among the former the 'Domestic Science Course' was of special interest : it 'included all things favourable for the making of an intelligent home.' The fortnight in Japan passed all too quickly for those who had so long looked forward to it, and on March 27 Mother Stuart left for Vancouver on the Empress of Russia.

On Thursday, the 16th, she left for Montreal. The long journey of four days and five nights was broken at Winnipeg . The visit had been announced in the local papers, so that all former pupils in the neighbourhood might come to meet her. The long strain was telling more and more upon her. She had been, as Father Gallwey had said he feared she would be, 'too willing'. Many visitors came to her at Montreal, among them some Christian Iriquois, one of whom spoke to Mother Stuart of Katherine Tegawithka, the Lily of the Mohawks, and showed a relic which she said she always wore round her neck without a moment's hesitation Mother Stuart kissed it reverently

On May 4th Mother Stuart left Canada for the States. The date fixed for her return to Europe was June 20 th. In these seven weeks she visited her convents at Kenwood, Maplehurst, Eden Hall, Madison Avenue, Elmhurst, and Manhattanville.

In the Vicariate House of Manhattanville she spent four weeks ; fully occupied weeks. In one she gathered together all the Head Mistresses of the Schools and Mistresses of Studies in America and discussed with them their important work. They had scarcely gone when the house refilled, this time with all the Superiors in the States and Canada.

In the days which followed, in the closest intimacy, she spoke to them as to her most trusted auxiliaries, of her desires and hopes for them and for the Society.

When in New York a doctor was at last called in, he was amazed to find her working in such a condition. 'But this cannot go on,' he said: 'you will kill her.' He declared as, indeed, was too evident that rest was absolutely necessary. But for her, at the moment, it was practically impossible. Each day had its allotted task, and until all had been accomplished. A few days later she left for Europe on the Olympic.

LAST DAYS AND DEATH. JUNE TO OCTOBER 1914

On the evening of June 26, 1914, she reached Roehampton. The joy of her return was clouded by anxiety, for her suffering was too evident. The light had died out of her eyes : they were sunken, and so weary.

A fortnight of complete rest was ordered, and she was to take it at Roehampton. She seemed to revive in the old loved surroundings. But it was evident to those who knew her best that her interest, even in all that was most beautiful on earth, was fading. God only had a place in her soul. It was more and more of an effort to turn from that heavenly attraction. On June 28 the first mutterings of the world-storm were heard from then almost unknown Serajevo. A month of alternating hopes and fears was to pass before it burst forth in all its fury, and on July 9 Mother Stuart returned to Ixelles, rested, so she said, but still far from well. She immediately settled down to her usual life of labour : to escape from it was impossible ; but all was done that could be to lessen the burden and obtain for her the still much-needed rest.

On July 23 the following letter was written, the last to the community at Roehampton.

It is a fortnight to-day since I left Roehampton, and I have been wishing to write a line in remembrance and in thanksgiving for the joy that God gave us all of being together again for so many unexpected days. So He gives us surprises in our life from time to time, all intended to shorten the way of our pilgrimage, and carry us forward, braced up by joy, towards our heavenly country. I often think of the many things we touched upon at recreation, and how much one would like to say further upon these and a hundred others still untouched. The spiritual world is so rich, tropically rich, and one longs to explore it, and speak of it to those who care, and that is all of us. I found the beatitude of hunger and thirst for the things of God all through the Society, and to come back to an old refrain that you well know ; I am quite sure that we must work in the vein of spiritual things, and especially spiritual conversations, to get something for our own hunger and thirst, and something to give to others; and also that there is a corollary of special beatitude for those who have helped to spread the spiritual banquet before others.

Talking of thoughts and spiritual things, I have not ceased to think about blind obedience, have you ? And the more one thinks of it, the more splendid it seems, for if one comes to think of it, the blindness is not from darkness but from light, the light that is beyond us still, which we may

gain in flashes, ' the flash of one trembling glance/ as St. Augustine says, in the most trivial moments and things, and the more we look, the more the blindness will be light, dazzling and incomprehensible, but unmistakably from heaven. And so we can see with wide-open eyes that God is nearer to us than we thought, in school-books, and details, and end-of-term occupations, and all sorts of things that are not as we should choose for ourselves : because obedience is there, and the more we walk in that way, the brighter the light of God's presence shines : and the least little following after selfwill or personal choice dims it, and chills our joy.

I was at Jette yesterday for a clothing, and it was supposed also to be my belated feast, so I reaped a great bouquet of all the charitable prayers of nine months from each category, and gave my account of her houses round the world to our Blessed Mother Foundress, and recommended you all to her.

The last week in July opened, one of the most momentous in the history of the world. On July 28 the die was cast. Austria declared war, rejecting Serbia's apology. Mother Stuart announced the evil tidings to the community, and begged for earnest prayers that a world disaster might be averted. But it was not to be, and a few days later Europe was aflame. On August 2 Belgium in her turn received an ultimatum, and having refused to betray her trust, saw armies pouring over her frontiers. For ten days her little army gallantly resisted the violation of her territory : but Liege fell on the 15th, and on the 20th Brussels was occupied. It would be impossible to describe Mother Stuart's sorrow and anxiety. Her days were spent in prayer, and in the immediate duty of trying to organise for the safety of her Religious. Our little party spent hours in the streets of Brussels, looking for passports, going from American to British consulates. I All the aspirants had left the Mother House in safety, if not without adventure, before the ' doors closed between Belgium and the outer world.'

No sooner had war been declared than Mother Stuart organised an ambulance in the house. All were set to work to prepare the necessary linen for its occupants. She came herself to these busy meetings, bringing delightful books, and proposing questions for discussion as if no great burden pressed upon her. At two o'clock in the morning of August 6 the house was roused by prolonged ringing of the bell. When the doors were opened, some fifteen or twenty nuns entered. They had left the house at Liege, for on account of its commanding position overlooking the town, it was exposed to heavy fire. Not all had come, the old and infirm and the young had been sent on to seek a safer shelter Mother House, of which they were the first inmates.

Mother Stuart's health had seemed to improve after her return to Ixelles, and the doctor held out hopes of a complete recovery. But the anxieties of these days were too much for her, and a bad relapse soon reduced her to a state of great exhaustion. The Mother House was cut off, not only from the outer world, but even from the Belgian convents. No communication was allowed. Rare messengers appeared from time to time, risking much to bring a few words from the isolated houses, many of which were at the moment in the firing line. After days of silence, a messenger arrived from Tournai, but only to announce that in the street righting, which had accompanied the taking of the town,

two of the nuns had met their death ; one of them the Superior of the house. Many of them were old and infirm, for the house had been a ' refuge' for the French exiles, and in barricading the windows looking on the streets, to protect her community, the Superior and her companion had met their death Those who so ravelly bade her go where duty seemed to call had another anxiety, for they knew that she was quite unfit for the fatigue and uncertainties of the journey.

To reach Ostend, an affair of two hours in normal times, now twelve or fourteen hours were needed. She was at the moment on the way to recovery, so the doctors said, and with rest and care might yet be well. The travellers could take no luggage, as they had to avoid attracting attention they made their way by a succession of trams to Ninove and then to Denderleeuw on the frontier of Brabant. But where they had hoped to find a train they discovered that the line was no longer in Belgian hands. Ostend was besieged by Belgians seeking to take refuge in England : to get a place on the overcrowded boats, Mother Stuart had to stand next day for some two or three hours in a long queue, waiting her turn. It was cold and damp, and when she reached Roehampton late that evening she was utterly exhausted. For four days she tried to take up her old life with the community. She even assisted at a ceremony on September 8, but the next day she confessed that she ' could no more.' On the following Saturday the doctors decided that an operation should be attempted, as the only means of saving her life. It was to take place the next afternoon, and at eleven o'clock on Sunday she received the Last Sacraments. In the absence of her assistants, she herself wrote a circular to the Society telling of her illness.

On October 17th the fever returned with violence, and the doctors knew that she was lost and died on October 20th. The public Requiem took place ten days later, on Friday, October 30th . Her death seemed to be a disaster not only for the Order, but to the cause of religious education and the Catholic Church. ' This is more than a private loss/ wrote another, ' it is a public calamity/ From Strassburg, through Italy, onsignor Zorn de Bulach wrote : *I have seldom met with such a union of goodness, gentleness, high-mindedness, and keenness of intellect. With her death I have lost a precious friendship, which had brought me both comfort and strength. My deep sorrow is only lessened by the thought that in heaven, where she now sees God, she will pray for me!*

Thus ended the life of one of Cottessmore's own, the 13th child of the Rector born of a titled family who through her own efforts, character and ability strove to become one of the most important Catholics of her age influencing and changing the Sacred Heart throughout the world. Her work can be seen in so many counties throughout the world from North America to Australia and Japan.

