

BX

4544

N471

T686R

EN 36

c:2

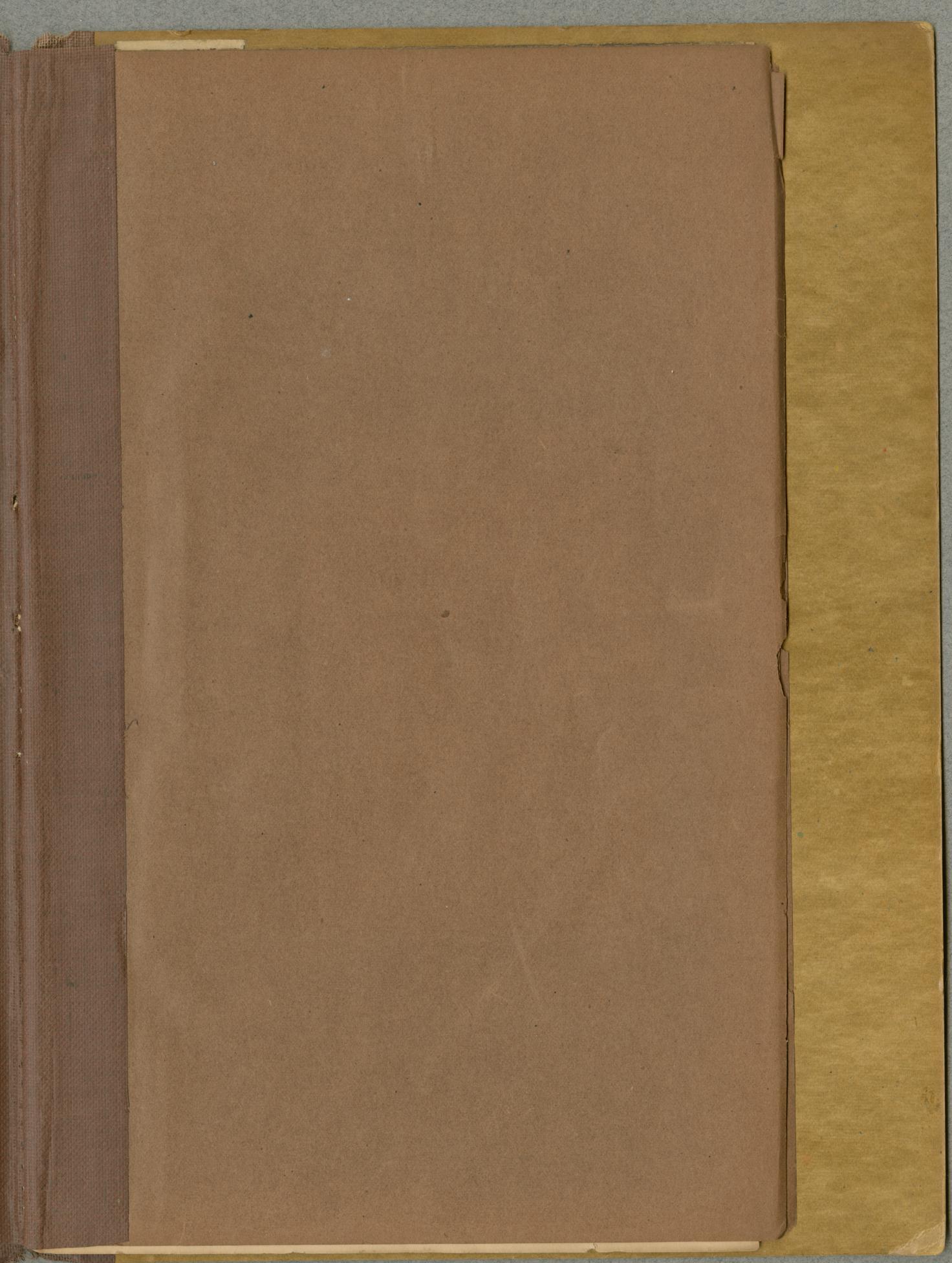
ACCOUNT OF THE VOYAGE OF THE
URSULINES TO NEW ORLEANS IN 1727

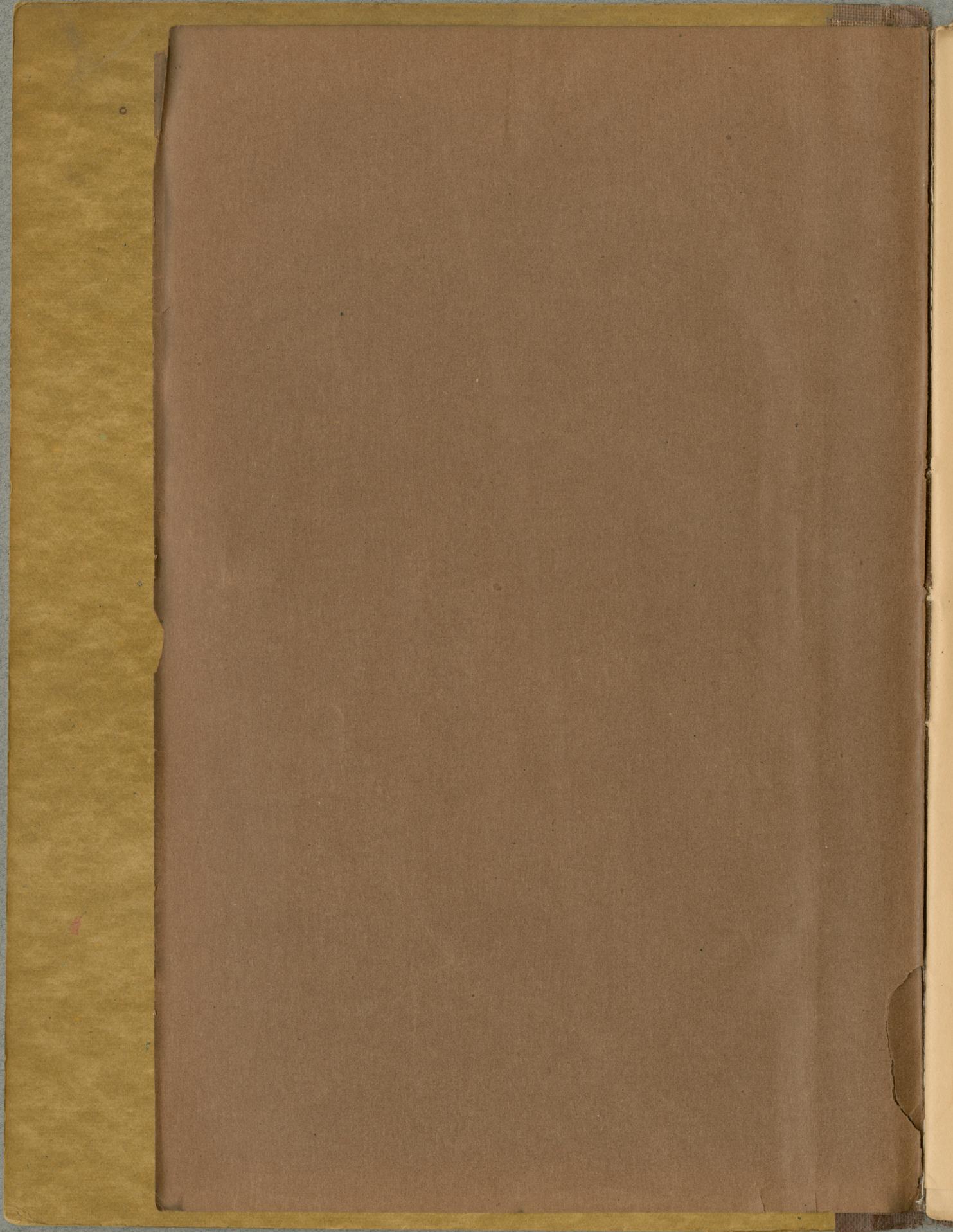
by

Marie Tranchepain de St. Augustin

413010







SPEC
CAPAM
BX4544
N471
T686r
E736
C.2

158878

ACCOUNT OF THE VOYAGE OF THE URSULINES
TO NEW ORLEANS IN 1727.

[Translated by JOHN GILMARY SHEA from the edition of the original manuscript printed in Shea's Cramoisy Series, 1859.]

ON the 12th of January, 1727, all the religious destined to found the monastery in Louisiana, assembled in the Infirmary of the Nuns at Hennebon to acknowledge as first Superior, Mother Mary Tranchepain of St. Augustine, who had been confirmed in two letters of Mgr. the Bishop of Quebec—one to Rev. Father Baubois, the other to that Mother. All the professed nuns, one novice and two seculars, came to make their submission to her according to their rank in profession, as follows:

Sister Margaret Judde of St. John the Evangelist, professed nun from the Rouen community.

Sister Marianne Boulanger of St. Angelica, from Rouen.

Sister Magdalen de Mahieu of St. Francis Xavier, professed of the Havre community.

Sister Renée Guiquel of St. Mary, professed from Vannes.

Sister Margaret de Salaon of St. Teresa, from Ploërmel.

Sister Cecilia Cavalier of St. Joseph, professed from the Elboeuf community.

Sister Marianne Dain of St. Martha, professed from the Hennebon community.

Sister Mary Hachard of St. Stanislaus, novice.

Sister Claudia Massy, secular, choir.

Sister Anne, secular, lay sister.

All the above-named religious came from France and founded the Ursuline Monastery at New Orleans, August 7, 1727. They were all professed members of the Paris congregation, except Sister St. Mary, who belonged to that of Bor-

deaux, but who joined the others under condition of taking the fourth vow, and conforming in all respects to the Paris rule.

They arrived at New Orleans in company with Fathers Tartarin and Doutreleau, most worthy missionaries of the Society of Jesus, after a painful voyage of five months, and they would infallibly have perished but for the protection of the Blessed Virgin and St. Francis Xavier, whom they invoked in all dangers. They came under the authorization of Mgr. John de la Croix de Saint Vallier, Bishop of Quebec, who administered the diocese. The gentlemen of the "Compagnie des Indes" were the founders, by the contract which they made with Rev. Father Baubois, Vicar-General of Mgr. the Bishop of Quebec, and Superior-General of the Louisiana missions. This Reverend Jesuit Father, animated with zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, came from New Orleans to France to obtain an establishment of his order and of the Ursuline Nuns for the education of youth. God blessed his good intentions by enabling him to succeed completely in his undertaking, notwithstanding a host of crosses and oppositions which he had to suffer from the persons most necessary to his work. But after a year's exertion by the Reverend Father and the Nuns, after a thousand impediments raised by the Lord Bishops, who, having first approved the project, subsequently raised many difficulties, when it came to giving *obediences* to the Religious of their dioceses. On one occasion they were obliged to appeal to his Eminence Cardinal Fleury, Minister of State.

The "Compagnie des Indes" esteeming that the most solid basis of the colony of Louisiana is what tends to advance the glory of God and the edification of the people, such as the establishment of the Reverend Capuchin and Jesuit Fathers, whose zeal and charity assure spiritual succor to the people, and inspire great hope of converting the Indians, and wishing also by a new and pious establishment to relieve the sick poor and at the same time provide for the education of youth, welcomed and accepted the Ursuline Nuns.

YSAARU
 TO VIBU
 INAD ANTON

The Company agrees to support six Religious, including the Superior; to pay their passage and that of four servants to attend them on the voyage; and moreover to pay the passage of those who, for any reason, might desire to return to France. It was agreed that one of the Religious should be Treasurer (Econome) of the Hospital, that she should have charge of all its temporal interests, and should present her accounts to the officers monthly; that two others should be constantly in attendance on the sick; that there should be one for the poor-school, and another to act as assistant, to replace the others in case of sickness, and relieve them when overtasked. When the Religious can do so conveniently, they shall, if they deem it proper, take young ladies as boarders, but no one of the Sisters appointed to the care of the sick is to be taken from that duty and assigned to the care and education of the boarders.

On the 9th of August, 1727, the holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered for the first time in a hall of the house where we were staying till the new monastery was built. They deferred placing the Blessed Sacrament there till October 5th in the same year, when the little tabernacle was prepared; and on that day the Rev. Father Baubois, our most worthy Superior, assigned to the care of the whole community by Mgr. the Bishop of Quebec, and acknowledged with the ordinary ceremonies, left us this precious deposit. He also confirmed Sister Mary Tranchepain of St. Augustine, as Superior.

RELATION OF THE VOYAGE OF THE FOUNDRESSES OF NEW ORLEANS,
WRITTEN TO THE URSULINES OF FRANCE, BY THE FIRST SUPERIOR,
MOTHER SAINT AUGUSTINE.

After having spent some time with the good Ursulines of —, we embarked February 22, 1727; but as the wind shifted, it was decided not to set sail till next day. This gave us time to arrange ourselves in our little apartment. This was a place that they had enclosed for us between decks; we

found ourselves somewhat cramped, but we had it all to ourselves, which gave us much pleasure.

We set sail, February 23d, at two o'clock in the afternoon; the weather was beautiful, and we went on deck to enjoy the air; but half a league from L'Orient we struck a rock; the shock was severe and the alarm general. At the same time the sails were furled. This being perceived from the harbor of L'Orient, they came to our assistance, and exerted themselves so vigorously that we were delivered from this first fright, and enabled to keep on our way. Then each one began to pay tribute to the sea. None of us escaped, and the least sick were Sisters Boulanger and Hachard, who got off with a slight nausea.

Meanwhile the winds changed and became dead against us. The vessel was constantly tossing, and gave lurches that sent us over each other. Scarcely was the soup on the table when a pitch would upset it. These little accidents and others made us laugh in spite of the seasickness which is a violent disease, and brings one almost to extremity: but when it is known, no one takes alarm, for people do not die of it. I was the one who suffered most: but that did not shake my vocation: our Lord infuses something indescribable into all we do for Him, that sweetens pain itself: my Sisters experienced this even more than I did, because they deserved it more. It was thus my consolation to see that in spite of discomfort, sickness caused by our long voyage, in spite of encounters with pirates, not one repented the sacrifice which she had made to God of her whole being, or was troubled at the dangers we ran. It was on one of these perilous occasions that we made a vow to the Blessed Virgin and to Saint Francis Xavier, in order to merit their protection.

Meanwhile our vessel made scarcely any progress, and in a fortnight we sailed no further than we ought to have done in three days. Our provisions were running short, water especially: and we were limited like the crew to a pint a day, and very wretched water at that. Our captain was forced to put

in at the Island of Madeira, three hundred leagues from Lorient. As soon as the chief city on that island discerned us, a boat was sent to know what we wished. They were satisfied and returned. Then the captain fired seven cannon to salute the town, which answered in the same style. When those who came to see us, reported that there was a Religious Community on board and some Jesuit missionaries, as those Fathers have a famous college in that city, they were not long in paying us a visit, before our Reverend Fathers had time to anticipate them. Nothing could be more gracious than these Fathers were: only one among them spoke French, but he said a thousand courteous things to us in the name of all. They begged us to land and take up our abode with them, but we thanked them. Our two Fathers went there the next day to dine, and were received with all possible hospitality and magnificence. We shared in their generosity, for they themselves brought us large baskets full of all kinds of refreshments. During the three days we spent in the harbor, these generous Fathers paid us several visits, and every day they seemed to find new pleasure in praising the zeal which had induced us to undertake such a long voyage. The greatest regret, he said, that they felt, was their inability to render us greater service, treating what they did as nothing compared to their good-will. These Fathers wear large spectacles on the nose, in the Portuguese style, and I noticed one who took his off in order to read something, which made us laugh. Otherwise, their manner is nearly that of our French Fathers, except that they wear their hair short.

We also received a visit from all the pupils of the Jesuits: they carry a rosary in their hands, which gives them a good appearance; but for all that, we are told that they are not the more devout. The most notable gentleman of the island paid us a visit: but we did not see any ladies; in this country they are not visible and are seen only behind gratings. They never go out except to mass, and all together, so that they form a kind of procession. They walk enveloped in great veils, in silence or saying their beads.

There are two communities on this island. The principal one is of the order of St. Clare, and the Abbess is a Portuguese princess. As they have greater freedom than secular women, their manners are consequently more easy. They soon received intelligence of our arrival, for the Abbess wrote me in a most polite and flattering manner to invite me and all my religious to her convent. Her style is very friendly, and she lavished praises on us. I replied as well as I could, and she received my letter with all marks of esteem and friendship that I could have desired from one of my own equals. The next day a young woman from on board, going to visit her in my name, was loaded with attentions and presents. They repeated to her their pressing invitation to induce us to visit their convent; but not thinking that we ought to do so, and the crew having laid in the necessary supplies, we thanked the city by firing a cannon, and made for the high sea to continue our voyage. The wind was favorable only two days; then it changed, and we were a long time making 200 leagues, at the end of which we descried a pirate. We immediately made the ordinary preparations for defense; each one armed himself, and the cannons were loaded. It was determined to shut us up in the safest part between decks during the action. Women bade farewell to their husbands. Mlle. La Chaise, who wished to join us, wept bitterly for fear of losing her brother, who is one of the officers of our vessel. As for us, thanks be to our Lord, not one of us showed any weakness. After all, the pirate, seeing himself not strong enough, stood off, and left us at liberty: a sad liberty for nuns to be on a vessel where it is impossible to have a moment to yourself. However, we performed our spiritual exercises, but amid the dissipation that prevails among people who think only of amusing themselves to pass the time, and this constituted our greatest pain.

At last we reached the tropic. It was Good Friday, and the holiness of the day having prevented the baptismal ceremony of which you have doubtless heard, it was deferred till Satur-

day afternoon. I will not give you the details of this ceremony, which is merely a diversion for the sailors, the more so as you cannot obtain exemption except by money, and as we numbered more than twenty, including servants, those of the Fathers as well as ours, we had a nice little sum to pay. Those who were unwilling to give anything had several buckets of water poured over them; but the great heat may have made the bath agreeable.

Some days later we had a second alarm, by meeting a vessel which followed us closely. We put ourselves on the defensive, and when the vessels came near each other, we were shut up in the place assigned to us. As our vessel was about to fire, the enemy sheered off a little, which gave us time to get supper. As the enemy was seen approaching from time to time, a strict watch was kept all night: we went to sleep, expecting all the while that they would come to rouse us. The next day the enemy bore away, the sea continuing to excite alarm, and so furious at times, that we expected to be swallowed up. But we suffered most from the length of the voyage, sighing more and more for that land so long and so ardently desired, which made us redouble our prayers to obtain more favorable weather. Our Lord sometimes granted us several hours of favorable wind, and by the assistance of this succor we reached Bay Saint Louis, where we were to anchor. As there was no religious house and no person of our acquaintance at that place, we intended to land only to take a stroll, and to oversee the necessary clothes-washing. But the very evening of the day we anchored, the Directors of the Company asked leave to pay us a visit, and declared that they wished us to lodge with them as long as the vessel remained in the roadstead. We could not resist such pressing offers and promised to go there the next day. These two gentlemen are perfect models of politeness and merit. They gave us one magnificent entertainment, and during the fortnight we spent with them, we ate in private: that is to say, with our Reverend Fathers only, and we were lavishly regaled.

Two days after our arrival the Governor came to pay us a visit. He is a Parisian gentleman, somewhat in years, but enjoying good health, and of very courteous address. He twice gave us dinner with French magnificence, and we had complete liberty to perform our spiritual exercises. This gentleman manifested a great desire to have an establishment of Ursulines in this country. The Directors of the Company have the same desire in order to educate the young creole girls who show much aptness. We must hope that we shall have a house of our order in this country. I say this, incidentally, in order to inflame some with zeal for the salvation of souls. What happiness to burn with so noble a fire! The lack of religion here ought to excite zeal: the most devout are those whose lives are not scandalous. The day we dined at the Governor's he wished us to visit the fort, situated on the sea, and which, according to connoisseurs, is something rare in its way. We found two or three garrisons drawn up to receive us under arms, the drums beating to do us greater honor. Some refreshments were served to us.

At last we embarked on the 19th, loaded with courtesies and presents: moreover, they offered us various refreshments, to alleviate the rest of our voyage, which was 500 leagues more.

The wind, at first favorable, became contrary, and calms greatly retarded our progress. We encountered two hostile ships, but we escaped from them by making ready to engage. Notwithstanding this misadventure, we hoped to reach port by the feast of Corpus Christi, but our Lord reserved one more trial for us to finish with, for the head winds, together with the currents, drove us for all we could do on White Island, at the very moment when we were impatiently expecting the pleasure of beholding the first land in Mississippi. We felt great joy on approaching that land, but alas! how short was our joy! and how dearly purchased. At the moment when we least expected, when enjoying ourselves on deck, the vessel suddenly struck so violently and repeatedly, that we thought ourselves lost beyond all hope.

The captain and crew lowered the sails, and used many manœuvres to extricate the vessel from its danger, but all was useless, and by means of the lead we found that the ship was five feet deep in the sand. The captain resolved to unload her. They began by the cannon, which were fastened to two pieces of wood so that they could not sink and they were committed to the sea. Then the ballast, composed of stones, lead, and iron, was removed. As all this did not lighten the vessel sufficiently, they decided to throw overboard the boxes, which were very numerous. Ours came first, so we had to make the first sacrifice. We did not take long to deliberate, and cheerfully consented to see ourselves deprived of everything in order to practice stricter poverty. We had been assured that being so near land, we need feel no fears for our lives; but we were to leave the ship only when it came to the worst, as the island is inhabited only by very cruel Indians. At last, at the very moment when we expected to see our boxes go over, the captain changed his mind, and threw overboard the sugar, which formed a large part of the cargo. Our Reverend Fathers and we lost a cask of 300 pounds which the Directors of the Company had given us.

For all that the ship remained too heavy and they again talked of our boxes, but by the permission of God, and the protection of the Blessed Virgin, whom we invoked during all this time, every time they came to seize our trunks, the captain changed his mind, and made them take something else. Sixty barrels of brandy and a large quantity of salmon were then thrown over, after which renewed efforts were made to get the ship off. They succeeded at last, which filled us with great joy. This peril lasted twenty-four hours, and few persons retired to sleep that night.

A few hours afterward we resumed our route, but we had not gone a quarter of a league before the vessel struck again with such violent and repeated shocks, that we had no hope left except in God's almighty power. Even the captain was quite astonished to see the ship hold together so long: and he

declared that nine out of ten would have gone to pieces. The crew were all in consternation. As for myself, I avow that I never saw death so near, and although I was always hoping in the succor of the Blessed Virgin, the alarm depicted on every countenance led me to believe that our last hour had come. What gave me surest consolation was the magnanimity of my Sisters, who constantly maintained themselves in a spirit of sacrifice, with surprising peace and calm. But our Lord was satisfied this time with our good-will, and gave His blessing to the labors of the captain, and the efforts of the sailors and passengers, who did not spare themselves on these occasions. Rev. Father Tartarin was conspicuous. We were extricated from peril this time also, and the captain had the "Te Deum" chanted in thanksgiving.

After this last danger, the boat always went ahead, and an officer had the lead in hand, till we got into deep water. Then we ran out of water. The heat was excessive: we suffered greatly from thirst, and this made us exchange our wine for water, but we could get it only bottle for bottle: and we were fortunate to get it at that price. This lasted nearly two weeks, for the winds and currents were almost constantly adverse; so that we had to anchor several times a day. At last we came in sight of a land unknown to us, and which we supposed to be inhabited by savages, on account of the great fires blazing there. However, we sent a boat ashore for water.

Some hours after the boat left us, the wind became favorable, and the captain not wishing to lose the chance of making headway, fired a gun to warn the officer to return, and at the same time weighed anchor; but the officer taking the report of the cannon for thunder, kept on toward land, leaving us in great alarm, for the sea was furious; however, he came off again next day. This island is called St. Rose. We remained there three or four days awaiting a favorable wind.

Having set sail we continued our route, and after a few days we descried Isle Dauphine, and at the same time a brigantine coming out to us. This sight filled us with joy, hoping

to hear some news of our New Orleans. Our hope was not vain, and we had the pleasure of seeing the brigantine reach our side, the captain proving to be one of ours. He asked to pay his respects to us, and it was from him that we first received the intelligence from Rev. Father Baubois, who was impatiently awaiting us, that our residence was all ready to receive us, and that they had begun to build our monastery. I avow that it was the first exterior joy that I had tasted since we left France, and it was so deeply felt that it made me, as well as our Sisters, forget all our past sufferings and hardships. We kept on, attended by the brigantine, toward Isle Dauphine, where we lay to, in order to obtain water, fearing the calms which are frequent in these parts.

We had scarcely anchored when a favorable breeze sprang up; we kept on to Balize, which we reached July 23, 1727, five months, day for day, from our departure. Balize is a port at the mouth of the Mississippi. Mr. Duverger, who was in command there for the Company, at once came to see us, and offered us his house till we could obtain conveyances to transport us to New Orleans. We accepted the offer so politely made. We took a long boat with part of our baggage, accompanied by Mr. Duverger. The weather was very bad, the boat overloaded, the sailors tipsy, and we found ourselves once more in imminent peril, from which we should not have been extricated if Mr. Duverger had not put in at Cane Island, near Balize. We had some difficulty in making land on account of a contrary wind, and we ran the risk of passing the night there among the men employed in building a fort under Mr. Duverger's direction. But that gentleman sent for periaguas, and we had to separate into two parties. We reached his house, and he treated us as well as he could. Mr. Duverger is very generous, and although he is young and unmarried, he leads a very correct and very secluded life, incessantly devoted to the duties confided to him. We remained at his house till the 29th. Father Tartarin had gone on some days before to inform Rev. Father Baubois of our arrival. It

was an agreeable surprise, for our long voyage had alarmed the whole country, and we were supposed to be lost. The Rev. Father Baubois lost no time in sending for us, and being unable to come in person on account of sickness, he assigned that duty to Mr. Massy, the brother of our postulant. This gentleman handed me two letters—one from Mr. Perrier, commandant of Louisiana, and Knight of St. Louis, and the other from Mr. La Chaise, director-general. All manifested a great impatience to see us, and as the long boat was too small to hold all our party we had to separate. I took the periagua with our five youngest Sisters, accompanied by Rev. Father Dautreleau, Brother Crucey, and a gentleman. Our other Sisters took the long boat with Mr. Massy, our two followers, and two servants of the Reverend Fathers. This little passage, which was only thirty leagues, was attended by incredible annoyance. As the long boat moved too slowly we went on. We set out on St. Ignatius' day, but we had to lie to every night, and one hour before sunset, in order to have time to put up our mosquito nets, because you are attacked by insects whose sting causes almost insupportable pain. We slept twice amid mud and water that fairly soaked us, and our mattresses were almost always floating in the water. All this tries one at the time, but we are amply rewarded afterward by the pleasure we feel in each one's relating her little adventures, and that we are utterly surprised at the strength and courage which God gives on such occasions: a clear proof that He never fails us, and that He does not permit us to be tempted above our strength, always bestowing graces in proportion to the trials He sends us.

The ardent desire we felt to reach our destination made us endure our pains with great joy. When we came within eight or ten leagues of New Orleans we began to see houses. Then there was a competition where we should stop to enable them to entertain us, and we were received everywhere with a joy beyond all expression. Boarding scholars were promised us from all sides, and some wished to confide the girls to us

at once. We thus spent several days at various plantations. At last Rev. Father Tartarin, who had gone ahead, returned to inform us that Rev. Father Baubois was expecting us. We accordingly set out at three o'clock in the morning, and arrived on the 6th of August at five o'clock. Our Sisters did not arrive till the next day.

It would be too prolix and even useless to endeavor to express the varied sentiments of my heart on beholding a land for which I had sighed so many years. You have too much zeal, my Reverend Mother, to doubt the excess of my consolation on setting foot on land. We found few people, on account of the hour; and we made our way to Rev. Father Baubois' house, where we soon met him, coming to us leaning on a cane, on account of his extreme feebleness. He looked pale and reduced, but his face was soon lighted up with the joy he felt at seeing us. He made us take a little rest, and had an excellent breakfast served, which was often interrupted by his friends, many of whom came to pay us their respects. About ten or eleven o'clock the Rev. Father took us to our abode. It is a house that the Company has hired, while waiting for the completion of our monastery. It is directly at one end of the town, and the hospital at the other. We cannot, therefore, assume the direction of it till our monastery is finished. The settlers at New Orleans keep watch that we lack nothing; there is a rivalry who shall send us most. This generosity puts us under obligation to them almost all. Among our most devoted friends are the Commandant and his wife, who are persons full of merit, and very agreeable company. This gentleman has acquired the respect of the whole country, which he traversed some months ago, and he has succeeded in appeasing the troubles which prevailed in the city. We also receive much politeness and courtesy from Mr. La Chaise, director-general of the Company; he has refused us nothing that we have asked so far. In a word, everything leads us to hope that our establishment will redound to the greater glory of God; and that in time it will effect great good for the sal-

vation of souls, which is our chief aim. For this we need prayers. I solicit them from you, my Reverend Mother, and hope that your zeal will obtain prayers for us from all the communities of the order with which you are in correspondence.

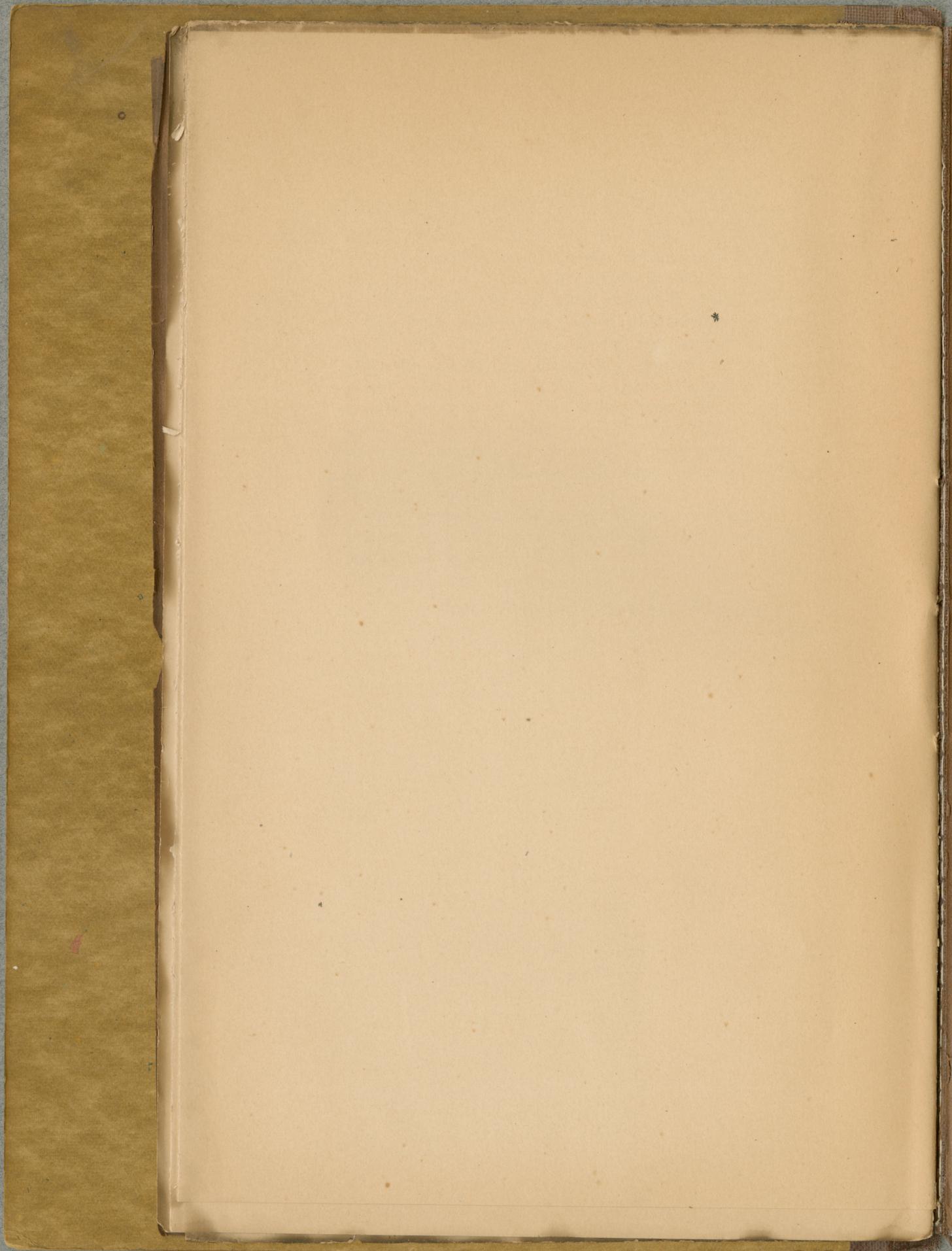
I earnestly hope that the perusal of this letter may inflame hearts with love for Jesus Christ, and prompt the Sisters, whom He and His holy Mother have prepared for us, to come to our assistance. Let the long voyage and hardships we have endured repel no one. Oh! if they only knew how magnificently God rewards what we do for Him, they would never take into account all the hardships through which they must go. As far as possible we shall take religious only of from thirty to forty years.

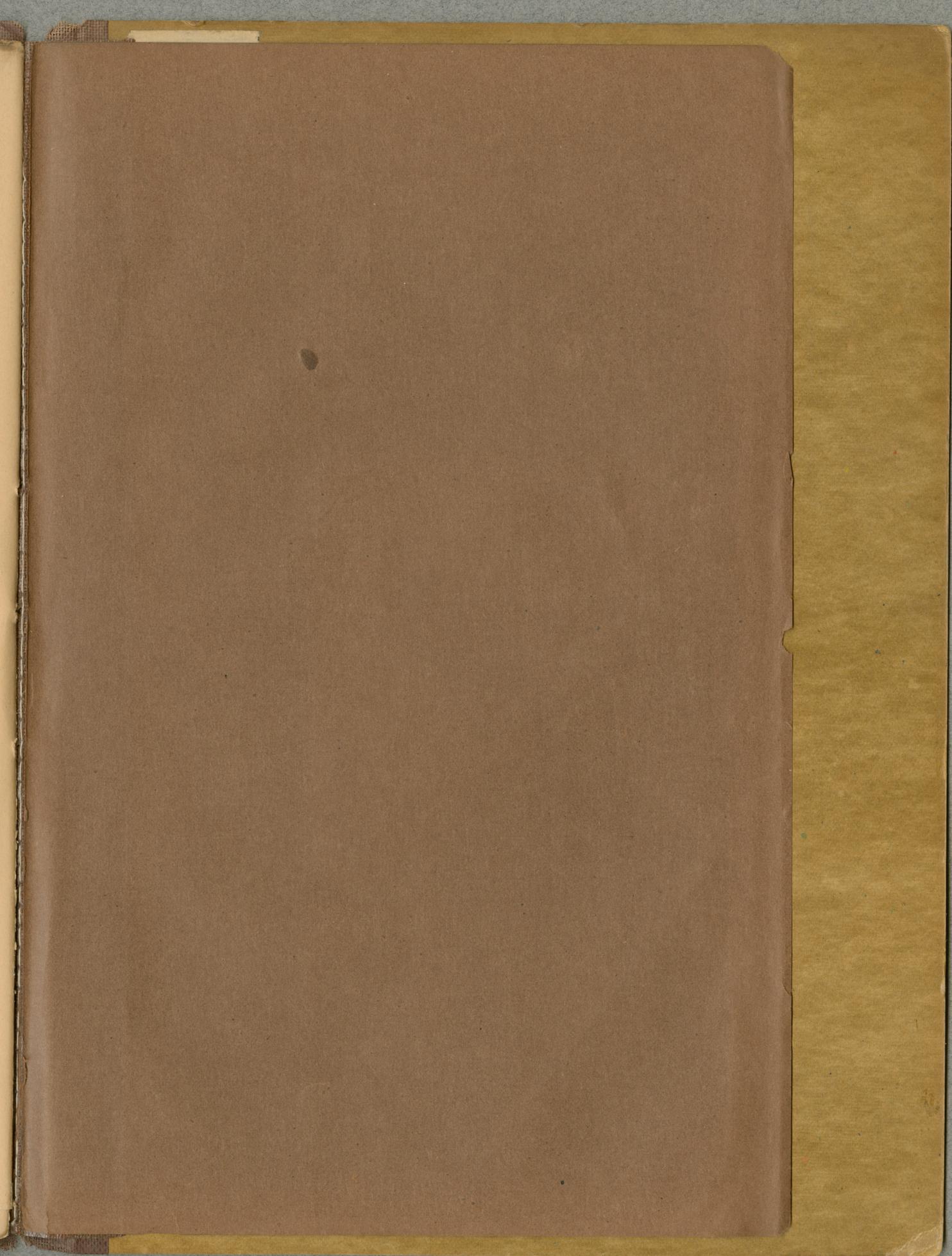
Rev. Father Baubois says mass for us every day, but does not leave us the Blessed Sacrament. May God be ever praised and adored throughout the earth.

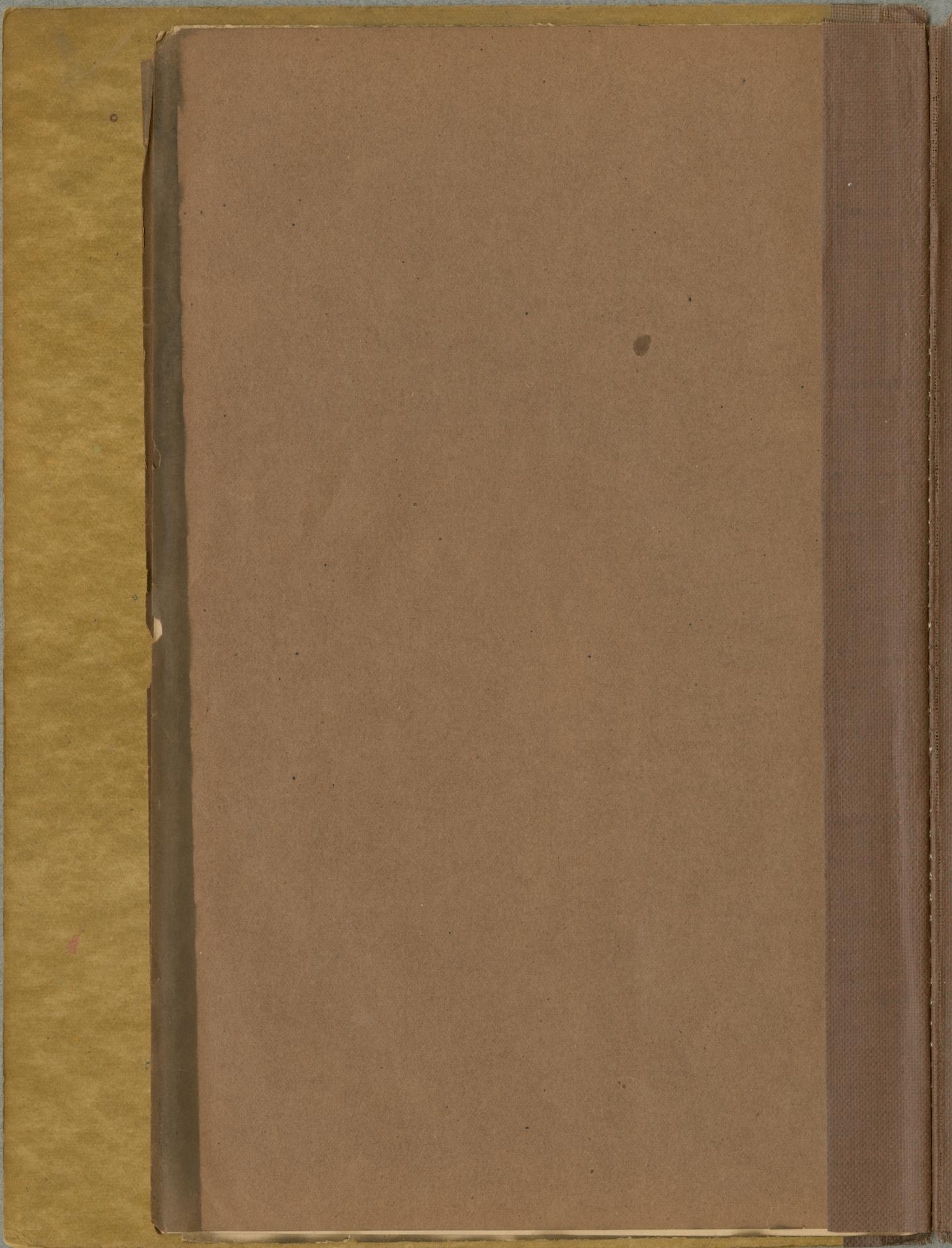
I have the honor to be, etc.,

SISTER MARY OF ST. AUGUSTINE TRANCHEPAIN
Superior.

413 010







Pressboard
Pamphlet
Binder
Gaylord Bros., Inc.
Makers
Syracuse, N. Y.
PAT. JAN. 21, 1908



158878

BX4544
N471
T686Y
En?
c

158878
c.2

02