



# Archive News

NEWSLETTER OF THE IBVM, INSTITUTE  
& IRISH PROVINCE ARCHIVES

## Teresa Ball The Final Years

In this newsletter, our final of this year of commemoration, we focus on the last decade of Teresa Ball's life, a period of growth, expansion, and difficulties; in which she began to make preparations for the future of this branch of the Institute.

Teresa Ball entered the final decade of her life, with no doubt some diminishment of energy but committed and alert to duties of her role, reflected in the prolific correspondence which she continued to receive and respond to. In her 60's, Teresa was already living longer than many of her peers; the average life expectancy remained at 50 years for both women and men during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. There is little evidence of a diminishment of capacity or ability, although the growing governance structures would have helped to alleviate some of the demands of leadership through collaboration and delegation. Her final years saw further growth of the Institute in Ireland and abroad, ongoing issues surrounding management of property, care of members and the writing of new constitutions, essential in putting the necessary structures in place for the governance of the Institute.

In October 1860, Teresa fell in Loreto Abbey Rathfarnham and suffered a broken hip, which ultimately failed to heal. She was thereafter diagnosed with cancer, for which there were only limited pain relief measures available. At her own request, Teresa was moved from Loreto Abbey Rathfarnham to Loreto Abbey Dalkey on 11 May 1861. She died there on 19 May 1861, after 47 years of religious life and aged 67.

## Final Decade – A Period of Expansion and Growth

Political, scientific and literary developments brought a rapid rate of growth and modernisation, the world was changing in the 1850's. The new branch of Mary Ward's institute, established in Dublin in 1821, was undergoing similar changes and growth. In 1851 alone, two new foundations were made in England (Manchester) and Spain (Cadiz). Both were beset with difficulties, Manchester by poverty and Cadiz by political turmoil and conflict. The Cadiz foundation ultimately closed in 1856, but the Sisters in Manchester, in spite of a lack of money and opposition, succeeded and would later expand to incorporate the IBVM English province. Encouraged by growing numbers of Sisters, and confidence in their ministries, new communities and schools were opened across the globe. In Ireland, Teresa personally oversaw the opening of new foundations in Fermoy (1853), Letterkenny (1854), Omagh (1855) and Kilkenny (1859).

Management of property and legal matters continued to absorb much of her time, as Teresa continued to receive and reply to detailed correspondence, issuing instructions to solicitors and legal advisors.

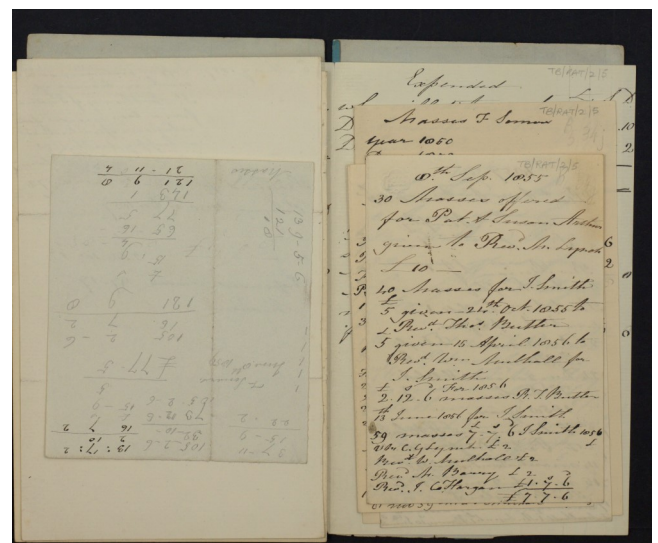


The desk and inkwell used by Teresa Ball for her correspondence.

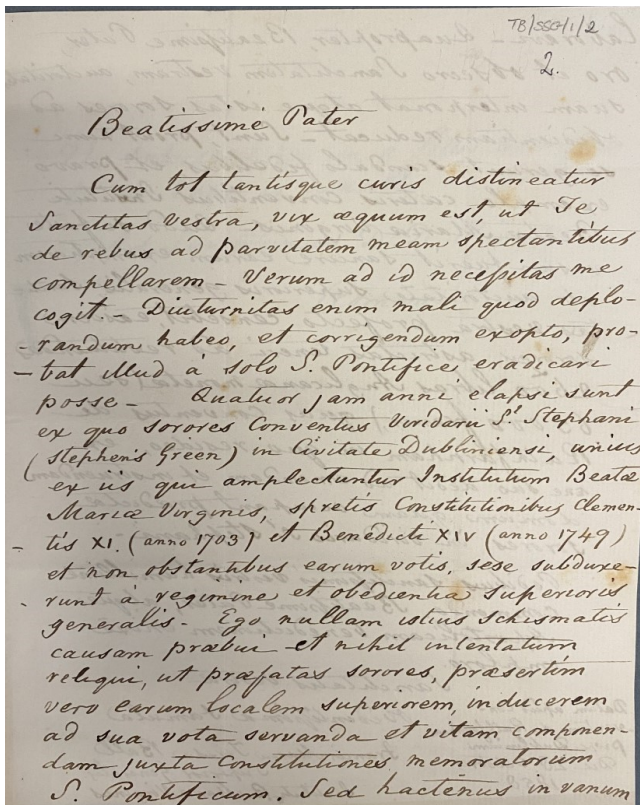
Surviving archival records indicate that she received over 650 letters in her final decade.

It has been estimated that only something between 2% and 10% of all documentation survives as archival records, and it is clear that a proportion of Teresa's letters have not survived, the surviving letters received during her final 10 years, offer glimpses of a busy and demanding period in her life.

*"I am firmly persuaded that our good God is lovingly watching over your every motion, breath and word, and will give you a special grace to do his ever adorable will. Hear him say to you, 'fear not, I will be thy reward exceedingly great.'"*



An example of continued attention to detail, small notebook recording payments made for pupils and offerings for Masses for benefactors of Loreto Abbey Rathfarnham.  
Ref: TB/RAT/2/5



Draft petition in Latin, from M. Teresa Ball (not in her handwriting), to 'Beatissime Pater', Pope Pius IX (TB/SSG/1/2)

The evils of longstanding have proved impossible to eradicate. It has been four years since the sisters in St Stephen's Green have withdrawn themselves from the authority of the Superior General. They beg the Holy Father to use his authority to lead these Sisters back to obedience. If the separation is sanctioned, then she requests that he will arrange a refund of £2,600 sterling to the Superior General. A clever strategic move which no doubt had a role to play in the decision of the dissenting Sisters to resolve their differences and accept Teresa Ball's authority over them.



Daniel Murray,  
Archbishop of Dublin

## Final Decade – Turmoil and Difficulty

Teresa's long-time friend and ally, Daniel Murray, Archbishop of Dublin died in 1852, and his death marked a tumultuous period in Teresa's life. Succeeded as Archbishop by Paul Cullen, simmering tensions and

difficulties with some communities, emerged in a dispute over authority and governance. The event became known as the 'Green Schism', and was centred on one of the communities in Dublin city centre, where some of the Sisters argued that the model of central governance proposed and in large, implemented by Teresa Ball was incorrect. Instead, they believed that each community should be independent, answerable only to the Archbishop or Bishop of the diocese in which they resided. Archbishop Cullen, who was a frequent visitor to Rome, was in receipt of a flurry of communication from both sides on the topic, and the matter lingered on for almost five years, during which time some feared a contagion effect, and the splintering of much of the new branch of the Institute across the world. Similar difficulties were encountered in India and in Canada, where the geographical distances separating communities from their

Superiors, presented additional obstacles to governance and unity. By 1859, the matter was largely resolved with the recognition of Teresa's authority and right to govern held by her as Superior General and her successor.

*'I require no more,  
to receive them back  
again to a Mother's  
bosom and to  
embrace them with  
a Mother's and a  
Nun's affection and  
tenderness.'*

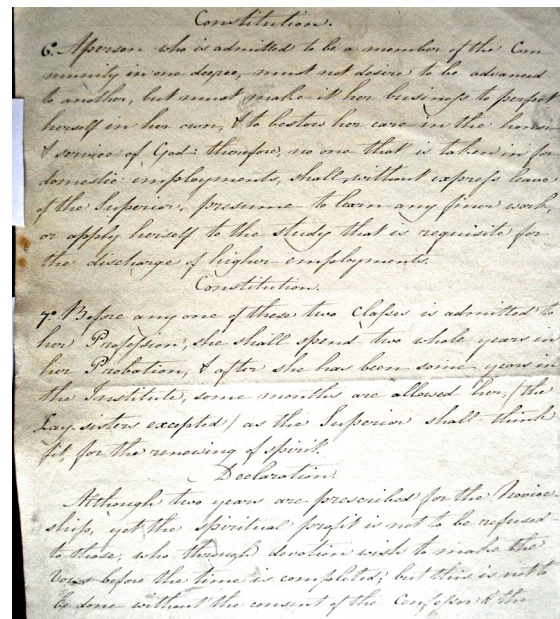
Teresa Ball referring to the  
Sisters involved in the  
'Schism', ref TB/SSG/1/12



## Final Decade – Preparing for the Future

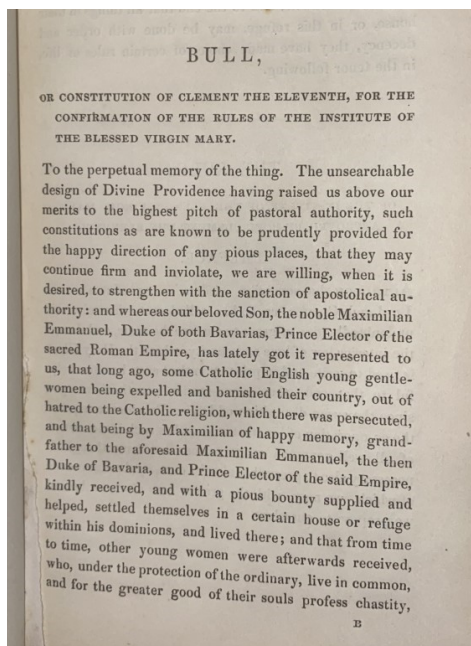
The continued expansion of the Institute, difficulties in defining their governance structures and the appointment of new Catholic bishoprics, etc, and perhaps a growing awareness of her own mortality, prompted Teresa to begin re-drafting the constitutions, the legal document which provided for the governance, structure and purpose of the Institute.

Copies of the first constitutions drafted by M. Frances Teresa Ball (almost identical to the 1707 constitutions) were printed with the permission of Archbishop Murray in 1832. The final published result, fondly known as the 'black book', (for its black cover and binding), was ceremoniously presented to the Superior of each departing community, a physical and tangible demonstration of the handing over of centuries of customs, regulations and spirit of religious life into her safekeeping. In 1861, a rescript (document granting papal approval) permitted any community in Ireland to formally place itself under the jurisdiction of the Superior General in Rathfarnham, subject to the approval of their local bishop. The structure of



Page 3 of the original constitutions, transcribed and brought from York by Teresa Ball  
GEN/CON/1/1/1

central governance advocated by Mary Ward, was thus formally approved (within Ireland at least), and this required the revision of the 1832 constitutions. Approval for the 'new' constitutions was granted after Teresa's death in 1861, and these remained in place across all houses founded from Rathfarnham until 1913. 20 years later, in 1881 a second rescript was granted permitting any community of the Institute outside of Ireland, to place itself under the jurisdiction of the Superior General in Rathfarnham, thereby confirming and providing legal basis to the relationship which had existed since the departure of the first IBVM missionaries in 1841.



Published constitutions  
GEN/CON/1/2/1

*"I... took to Ireland,  
the Constitutions to which we  
were trained in the Novitiate ..."*

*(M. Teresa Ball, February 1859)*

## Teresa Ball, 1861, a life in contemplation

The reason why Teresa chose to relocate herself from Loreto Abbey Rathfarnham to Loreto Abbey Dalkey is unrecorded. Some have speculated that she chose to shield the large Rathfarnham community and young novices from the pain of witnessing her death, others have speculated that Dalkey on the Irish coast, held a special place in her heart as the closest physical location to her beloved Bar Convent, York.

Whatever her motivation, Teresa had a lot to review and reflect upon. During her 47 years of religious life, she had entered a small, disguised convent in northern England, uncertain of her future in returning in Ireland, but had returned some 7 years later, establishing not one or two houses of Mary Ward's Institute in Dublin as she had envisioned, but a branch of the Institute that soon had a solid global presence.

The transmission of the values, vision of religious life that she had experienced in York, to countless young women who joined her in religious life, was dependent initially on her own skills of communication and demonstration. Her success can be measured by the global presence, ministries and impact of the Institute in the lives of the many women, children and men throughout the world today.



Loreto Abbey Dalkey, built by Teresa Ball 1842-1843



Grave of M. Teresa Ball at Rathfarnham

*"Each of our actions  
should be performed  
as perfectly as  
possible for God, who  
is glorified by small  
as well as by great  
things."*

M. Teresa Ball