

The first letter from the book:

### Mary MacKillop and Flora

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14th August 1866 – Penola

My dearest Mamma,

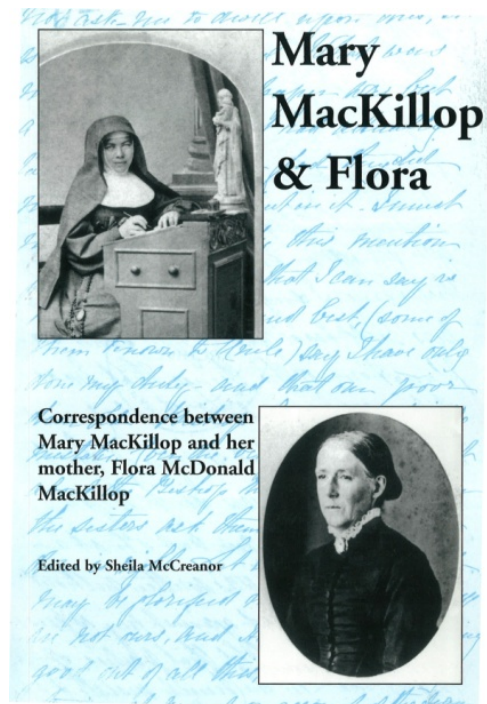
A short letter will be better than none. It was easy for me to write on Sunday and as Lexie had written to you on the previous Thursday, I do not mind it so much. I did not see your letter to Aunt Eliza, nor do I know if you have heard from Uncle. If not, tell me, and I will remind Aunt about the passage money.

You will see Father Woods as he returns from Melbourne where he has gone to our Bishop's Consecration. He will be sure to see Maggie. I hope that Seaton<sup>1</sup> will be the means of restoring her to health - she seemed in such good spirits when she last wrote. I hope we may soon hear of poor John's arrival in New Zealand; indeed, I fear that your mind won't have any ease until you do hear. Poor fellow, he has many a hard day's work before him yet, but what matter if it please God to spare him his health - and keep him attentive to his religious duties.

Father Woods has called for tenders for a new stone school-house, a large schoolroom and two small ones attached - not enough to make a residence, but yet, if we are without boarders, I think we might manage to make it do. Whether or not, the school is required, and we hope it may be ready to have the Xmas Examinations held in it. It is to be built at the foot of Father Woods' garden, quite close to the chapel.

Everything is so dear here, and the school charges are so low, still we manage to live and have what we require, thank God. Lexie is now trying to make up for lost time, and we hope that her present good health may continue. Donald, too, has his lessons regularly, but of course cannot get on well with his Latin until Father Woods returns. I always mean to write to poor little Peter, and yet never do it; give him a kiss for me and tell him how much I love to hear of his being a good boy.

Do not, dearest Mamma, fear that Donald will be urged to embrace a Religious life. If it please God to give him the grace of a true vocation I am sure none will be more pleased at the same than yourself, but in the meantime, let us pray that God will direct him and all of us to do His Will, and in the trials, annoyances and anxieties we daily experience, oh, may we ever recognise that loving



<sup>1</sup> Seaton is an Adelaide suburb not far from the sea.

Fatherly hand that only seeks to draw us closer to Himself by giving us opportunities of suffering something with Him.

I but remind you, my own loved Mother, of what you so often sought, not by precept only but by example also, to impress on the minds of your children. You must often have moments, nay hours, of deep anxiety, and made so much worse by the feeling that you are almost alone, that those of your children on whom you most depended are far from you, either taken up with fresh duties or unable to comfort you in any way, but God will comfort you. He will tell you that He wishes your reward for a life of self-denial and love to be very great, that He wishes you to seek your only consolation in Him - and suffering with Him - and oh! so much more that I am not worthy to tell so good a mother. If we could but bear in mind that we are only poor travellers, that our home is not here, would we not joyfully toil on in the hope of soon reaching the happy home that we knew awaited us.

Dearest Mamma, my letter is becoming rather serious and I beg that you will excuse it. Annie and Lexie are down at the church, the former to practise, Lexie to accompany her and also to pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. They will wait for the mail, when I hope there will be a letter from you, for 'tis a long time since we have heard from you. Mrs Finn will be pleased to hear that Father Woods is going to Portland. I have not written to her, but please give her my love and tell her she is not forgotten. I had a letter, or note, from Lizzie O'Reilly but very little news save that they had all had the Influenza. Aunt is getting a little stronger. Poor Uncle has a sore toe, and the rest are the same as usual. Believe me ever, dear Mamma,

Your fond child  
Mary MacKillop

Written on the front page: Girls send their love. Annie did not return in time to write.