

Of dreams long past, and loves long dead,
Of hopes decayed, of funeral knells,
O mission bells, sweet mission bells!"

San Gabriel Mission was founded in 1771 by Father Junipero Serra, a native of Cadiz, Spain. This scholarly man, turning his back on the pleasures of the old world, entered the priesthood and sailed from Cadiz to take up missionary work in America. After a tiresome voyage of ninety-nine days, he landed at Vera Cruz, and thence travelled across country to San Diego where a mission had already been founded. From San Diego, with three other priests and a guard of ten soldiers, he journeyed to the "mysterious vineyard of Upper California," and there on the banks of the beautiful river San Gabriel, he founded the mission. For many years the mission made little progress on account of the hostility of the Indians, but later, the natives becoming friendly, the mission prospered. The good husbandry of the priests is evidenced by the remains of the great earth ovens and the beautiful vineyard which boasts the largest grapevine in the world. The mission being now in a prosperous condition, the priests were enabled to turn their attention to the development of the country. Accordingly, a petition for the founding of the city of Los Angeles, which was at that time but a small *pueblo* made up of a handful of Spaniards and a few Indians, was sent to King Charles III of Spain. After a delay of four years the request was finally granted, and on September 4th, 1781, a procession, consisting of the governor, the priests and a band of Indian acolytes bearing the cross left the mission and proceeded to the Pueblo where with great pomp and ceremony the Pueblo de Nuestra S. de Los Angeles was founded. Such was the founding of this beautiful city of the Angel Country—an event quite unparalleled in the history of the United States.

Evidence of the zeal, industry, and scholarly qualities of its founders may be had all through the mission. The great timbers which form the arched roof and those which support the choir gallery were all hewn by hand and are still intact. The baptismal font made of hammered copper, where some twelve thousand Indians were baptized into the Church, is still in use and the deep hollows worn in the stone flags upon which it rests testify eloquently to its long service. The walls are covered by paintings, dealing largely with scriptural subjects, which are quite characteristic of Spanish art of that period; the library contains books on religion, history and philosophy, which date back as far as 1489, as well as many interesting documents drawn up by the priests relating the story of the struggles in the early life of California.

As we left the mission the bells pealed out musically for vespers. Turning, we were impressed by the beauty of the scene. To the eastward the high, snow-capped peaks of the Coast Ranges shining in the level rays of the setting sun; to the westward, over the fertile fields and vineyards the sun dipped into the blue expanse of the Pacific; while the foreground, nestled snugly in the valley rose the mission walls in all their simple beauty, sur-