

LEAGUE OF THE SACRED HEART.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul and its Works.

GENERAL INTENTION FOR OCTOBER 1899.

Recommended to our prayers by His Holiness Leo XIII.

American Messenger of the Sacred Heart.

"The poor you have always with you" was rather a proverb than a prophecy in the mouth of our Blessed Lord. Do what we may we cannot prevent an unequal distribution of the goods of this world. Year after year our theorists are issuing volumes of recipes for the equalization of the benefits and burdens of property, and every civil legislature devotes some of its sessions to making laws for ridding the world of poverty, and still poverty and the poor are with us, and the number of men, women and children keeps growing daily, and the rich also grow, not in number, but in wealth at the expense of the poor. The earth and its fruits and the capital with which these are obtained is in the hands of a comparative few whom the rest of mankind either serve as dependents or dread as depollers. Vast numbers live on the credit or influence which their skill or experience obtain for them, but the great majority of men and women either labor for what barely sustains them during the hours of labor or cannot get employment at all. Verily, "The poor you have always with you."

Although poverty cannot be entirely removed from the earth, still its miseries can be lessened, and men can be warned and exhorted to avoid its causes—chiefly idleness, expensive habits or rash speculation; they can also be helped to repair their losses, and, while undergoing its hardships, they can be encouraged to bear them hopefully. The State does much to give physical relief by building, at the expense of the public, which too often means, at the expense of the other poor, almshouses, hospitals, children's homes and other institutions, which at least keep some poor people housed and fed and clothed, if they do not train them to struggle successfully against poverty. The State, some benevolent organizations and private individuals, do their share to help their own when in need, sometimes ostentatiously, it is true, and very commonly for some other motive besides the motive suggested by our Lord, that all this be done in His name and as if done to Him. The State that is given with a motive of self-interest, whether the aim-giver seek notoriety, influence, credit, or, as in the case of Masonry and the sects, make the aims a means of proselytism, may relieve temporarily some hunger, sickness, disgrace, but it cannot mend the evils of poverty or make its victims resigned and cheerful, and trustful in Providence.

As it is proverbial that "the poor we shall always have with us," so it is proverbial that only the poor, or at least the poor in spirit, can properly assist the poor. Only the poor know sufficiently the miseries of poverty to sympathize with its victims; only the poor live so closely with the poor as to detect the need and distress which the respectable poor always strive to conceal; and only the poor, or poor in spirit, are sufficiently detached from worldly possessions to be ready at any time to devote all they can spare, and sometimes more, to the assistance of their neighbors. Hence it is that the reticence of some and the generosity of others, keep this century of statistics from discovering a vast amount of poverty which is known and relieved only by those who are themselves in need. Hence also the objection often raised, even by Catholics, that little is done by the faithful to relieve the poor simply because no show is made of what is done, and the suggestion made by superficial men that an organized system of charity such as prevails in many of the sects would be more effective than our own, are either the excuses of men who either do not wish to contribute to help the poor, or who prefer to buy themselves off the obligation to help their needy brethren by paying money rather than by visiting the poor and seeing their miseries in real life, or associating with the men who devote their lives to this.

When founding a society for the relief of the poor in Paris in 1833, Frederick Ozanam wanted some active and external occupation by which they could exercise their zeal, and meet the taunt of the Simonians, who called on them to show their works. Very good and disinterested motives were these surely, but they were not the highest in the aim of these young men. They were not a set of restless agitators nor faultfinders; they did not provoke others to do what they realized was in their own power; they were not discouraged because all the world did not join with them; they were not of the class that has recourse to external works of mercy to quiet their consciences or to escape the more important duties of piety, prayer and the reception of the sacraments. Their leading motive was to exercise among men and for men the spirit of divine charity, which impelled them to labor for their own welfare as well as for their neighbors, and to interpret from a true Christian standpoint the fraternity, which for forty years had been a shibboleth of a series of revolutions which had resulted only in turning every man's hand against his brother.

It is a sign of heaven's blessing on the foundation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul that it is so thoroughly Catholic that its conferences have been formed in every nation, so that its spirit and rules have been easily adapted to so many different places and times. It is another sign of the same blessing that, although it has grown so rapidly and spread so widely, it still preserves its vitality and is ever ready to meet new conditions without departing from its original spirit. From the beginning, not content, in the words of M. Bailly, its first President, "with a mere doling out of alms," or, "bringing the poor a pittance of money or food," its members were instructed to make their visits an opportunity of rendering moral assistance, and of giving the alms of good advice. In this spirit they sought to fulfill the first precept and obey the whole law, by helping not merely the body but the souls also of the poor. Every year we read with interest the Reports of Conferences, in which it is easy enough to reckon the good done by the contributions received and the alms conferred; but who save God and His angels can appreciate properly the good done by the visits of the members, however trifling the material aid they bring, and howsoever meagre the advice they give? Piety and sympathy can be expressed better by deeds than by words, and one glance of either is enough to save a heart-broken and despairing sufferer.

Besides administering to every element in man, the soul as well as the body, the Vicentians sought to employ every God-given talent and gift with which they had been blessed. The lawyer, the doctor, and the man of business, or of social influence—all could help, so that the charity should be Catholic as well as divine, uniting all degrees of men in the work of beneficence, and leaving no proper human need unsupplied. What a broad and all-embracing charity this is, without the slightest self-interest; nay, with self-interest, as befits true charity, altogether excluded, so that no one might make his almsgiving or merciful ministrations a source of worldly or political advancement. It was impossible that such an association should not have helped its own members as well as the poor they were succoring. To this help Ozanam bore constant testimony. "This dear Society is also my family," he wrote in 1853, twenty years after its foundation. "Next to God it was the means of preserving my faith, after I left my good, pious parents." To this the Holy Father has lately testified in his letter dated February 16, 1899, to the President of the Society, Antonius Pages, from which we quote the following extracts as given in the St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly, for August, 1899.

"We congratulate you especially upon this, that your work has become so widely acceptable that even amongst men of the humblest condition in life, earning their bread by manual labor, you have gained numerous associates and fellow-laborers devoted to the same task. As this participation in your labors contributes greatly to the welfare of all, you will easily understand how highly it must be appreciated, and with what care it must be fostered. Indeed, when Christian charity, aroused by the example of the rich, will have made its way among men in the humblest ranks of life, a sure hope may be entertained of restoring that harmony between the various classes of society, the want of which constitutes the most formidable danger to the public good that it is possible to conceive."

Here a new difficulty presented itself. Mataafa for a time had exercised the royal authority as deputy of the exiled king, but the Samoan chiefs being assembled at Faleaia in 1888, decreed that he should himself be king and saluted him as Malletoa Mataafa. Now that Laupepa was recalled from exile, the question was asked, whom will the natives recognize as King? In so far as the natives were concerned, the question was soon settled. Mr. William Cooper, who was municipal magistrate of Apia (The Samoan Question, Auckland, 1899), tells us that the old King Laupepa "broken in spirit, and feeble in health, was unwilling to resume the cares and obligations of sovereignty, and on October the 2nd, 1889, a great meeting was held at Vailala. Upwards of 2,000 people were present, and the principal chiefs of Atua, Aana, Tuamasaga, Savai and Manono were there. At that great meeting Malletoa Laupepa publicly and solemnly abdicated in favor of Mataafa, who was then as putatively and formally appointed and confirmed King of Samoa."

Protestant missionary influence, however, and foreign political intrigue would have none of this. The three protecting governments persisted in recognizing Malletoa Laupepa as King, and through the efforts of the foreign residents, and still more of the various Protestant missionary agents, a considerable number of the chiefs and natives pledged their allegiance to him. Mataafa refused to acquiesce in the decision of the protectorate Powers, and retired to the old royal village of Malle, some ten miles distant in the interior from Apia. The foreign residents styled him a rebel, and treated him as such, but the great majority of the chiefs and natives continued to look to him as their King.

It was whilst Samoan affairs were in such confusion that the Countess Jersey, under the guidance of Mr. Stevenson, and accompanied by some friends, paid a visit to the head quarters of Mataafa at Malle. In an article in the Nineteenth Century, already referred to, she incidentally bears witness to the religious fidelity of Mataafa and the other Catholic natives. "Mataafa's house," she tells us, "is a large one, perhaps 50 feet long by 40 feet wide, and is of the usual oval, or rather elliptical, shape. Like all chiefs' houses, it consists of a high pitched roof, made of sugar cane leaves, which are strung on to reeds so ingeniously that within they appear to form a neat mat-like ceiling, while without they fall over in a thick thatch. The roof is supported on strong posts and cross-beams of bread-fruit or other substantial trees, and the eaves descend very low. In the middle rise two or three very strong centre posts made of the trunks of specially selected trees, like the roof-tree of the Norse-men. These sometimes divide picturesquely into two main stems, and across them are fastened one or two beams, according to the dignity of the chief, sharpened at either end something like the prows of ships. No nails are used, all the beams and posts being securely bound together with cocoa nut fibre. A single room occupies the whole of the interior, nor are there any other walls, blinds of cocoa-nut matting being let down at night, or when required as a protection against the weather. The ground is covered with stones and pebbles laid so as to make a perfectly level floor, and over these are spread an abundant supply of mats. Everything is kept scrupulously clean, and the woodwork often decorated with creepers. A chair apiece had been provided for our accommodation, and, when we were seated, cocoa nuts were brought in. Cocoa nut milk, when the nuts are freshly gathered, is delicious and refreshing. After a few minutes conversation, Mataafa begged to be excused while he attended evening prayer. He is a devout Roman Catholic, and some dread lest renewed civil war should assume a religious character, Malletoa being an adherent of the London missionaries. . . . Ordinner, which was cooked in an outer building, and served on a table in the back part of

the house, consisted of pigeons, chickens, taros and yams; we were supplied with plates, knives and forks; while Mataafa, who sat with us, ate with his fingers. . . . Perhaps the strangest impression amid such surroundings was to be awakened at early dawn by the singing in the chapel close by. A breakfast, resembling our supper of the previous evening, was prepared for us, but the obligations of his faith compelled Mataafa to fast, yet another surprise in the life of a nominal savage."

A few months subsequent to Lady Jersey's visit, the war crisis supervened, in which the three protecting Powers took an active part. Mataafa was easily defeated and took refuge in the island of Manono. At the urgent prayer of the then Vicar General, the present illustrious Bishop of Samoa, Monsignor Broeyer, Mataafa surrendered to Captain Bickford of H. M. S. "Katoomba." He was deported to Faleaia, and spent five years in exile. It was only last year that the German Government sanctioned his return. A few weeks before Mataafa landed at Apia, Malletoa Laupepa died. Once again Mataafa was unanimously elected King by the Samoan chiefs. Then followed the vicissitudes of the present year, with which the reader is familiar, and on which, for the present, we need not dwell.

It has been already remarked that Samoa is a sort of Protestant head-quarters for the training of natives to serve in the ministry in the various groups of islands throughout the Pacific. It will not be uninteresting to cull, from a work just published, a few passages to illustrate the achievements of those native missionaries.

Mrs. Edgeworth David last year accompanied her husband, Professor David, in his scientific excursion to the island of Funafuti, a coral island of the Ellice Group, and in an interesting volume (Funafuti, London, 1899) has given to the world her experiences of life among the natives there. The Ellice Islands have been a favorite reserve of the L. M. Society for many years, as their missionaries are the only ones who hitherto have visited them. The natives, however, do not appear to have prospered under their guidance. Fifty years ago the population of Funafuti and some neighboring islands was reckoned at 10,000; at present it is no more than 300. It is only a few years since those islands passed under the British protection, and one of the first measures adopted by the acting British Commissioner was to sweep away a number of restrictions hitherto imposed by the Protestant missionaries on the natives. For instance, on Sundays it was forbidden them to indulge in their native amusements, or to wash, or even to cook their meals. For the inf action of any of these rules, a fine of 1s. was exacted. To be absent from church service, was mulcted in like manner. The church at Funafuti is described as a large, lofty, oblong building: "there were no less than twenty-two large windows, the only glazed windows in the village; they had never been cleaned since the church was last whitewashed, but many had been broken." Natural flowers, of which the natives are so fond, were forbidden in church, but the females were obliged to wear hats, besides the lava-lavas and the tiputas. The sale of such articles was, of course, reserved to the missionary. Mrs. David was particularly startled by the hats, which are never worn excepting in church. "Just imagine," she says, "if you can a small Tyrolean hat perched rakishly on a huge fluffy mass of black hair, and held in place by two frayed strings of soiled white calico, the hat itself covered with scraps of red, white, blue, pink or yellow print—a veritable crazy hat, occasionally ornamented with a tattered brass button, a draggled feather, a dirty artificial flower, or streamers of red and blue worsted braid, and sometimes all of these together. It took us all sermon time to recover from the shock those hats had given us."

Sunday life at Funafuti had some peculiar features. With the exception of a "short gossiping time after 2 o'clock service," Mrs. David writes, "the natives never did anything on Sunday, but eat, sleep, and go to church or prayer meeting. After each spiritual exercise they stretched themselves out with a sigh of relief on the floor of anyone's hut, at what they could get and plenty of it in that position, and slept soundly until the church drum woke them again for another service." As a counterpart for the mental fatigue of Sunday, the natives never did any work on Monday, but spent the day in bathing or other amusements and idleness.

The administering of Holy Communion is thus described by Mrs. David: "The pastor in charge stood in front of a rough little table that served for a reading desk, and which I noticed had some kind of vessels on it, covered with a soiled sheet of once white calico. He addressed his flock briefly, but he reverently raised the grimy cover, and revealed a sight which filled me with horror, though one swift glance round the congregation assured me that they saw nothing out of the usual way on the table. The taro (which was to take the place of bread) was placed on two soiled enameled plates, the cocoa-nut juice (which took the place of wine) was in a brown crockery tea pot with a broken lid and spout, and the cups were just the common German beer glasses with their metal tops broken. Nothing was clean and nothing was whole."

Mrs. David does not give any account of the doctrines preached by this native representative of the London Missionary Society in this "north-

west out station from Samoa." Two facts, however, which she mentions in connection with the marriage rite, will enable us to form some idea of the Gospel with which those interesting children of islands were evangelized. A native married woman, who was unhappy in her domestic relations with her husband, applied to the native magistrate for a divorce. He replied that, "according to Christian law," he could only grant her the desired divorce if she committed adultery. She accordingly proceeded to verify the required condition, and the divorce was at once granted to her. Describing another occurrence, Mrs. David writes: "A youth and a maiden wished to enter the holy estate of matrimony, and applied to his sable reverence, the native clergyman, to unite them according to the Christian law and custom. His Reverence ruled that it was against the law to marry a Church member to one who was not a Church member; and in this case the girl had been admitted to membership and the boy had not. This was a great blow to the amorous young couple, and they racked their brains to find a way out of the difficulty. At last, with the childishness of their race, they agreed that, as the youth had been unable to obtain his ticket of membership from the pastor, the girl had better do something to forfeit hers, so that they, being on the same plane of unworthiness, might be eligible for each other." She accordingly committed some disqualifying offence, and this being reported to his Reverence, he "solemnly excommunicated the girl for her grievous sin and then married her to the man of her choice, there being now no ecclesiastical bar to their union." Such are the lessons of morality which, under the name of Christianity, are imparted by the agents of the L. M. Society to the islanders of the Pacific.

ONE EVERY HOUR.

Within recent years a return has been made to Rome by the Bishops of England and Wales of the number of converts annually received into the fold in their several dioceses. The figures are collected from parochial registers, and in them we have an authentic and official statement upon a point which is naturally of the deepest interest to all Catholics. During the course of twelve months (1897-1898) no less than eight thousand three hundred and sixty-six converts were received in our churches throughout England and Wales. The winning power of Catholic truth and zeal of our clergy have their eloquent testimony in these numbers.

There exists among devout Catholics the old and beautiful custom of raising the heart to God in prayer and loving worship every time that they hear the clock strike the hours. In England, this pious practice may well be combined with thanksgiving. For to every Catholic heart there will be joy and consolation in the thought that almost for every time, day and night, during the course of the year, that the clock strikes an hour, a convert is received into the Catholic Church in England. *Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed domini Tu da gloriam!* —The Pittsburg Observer.

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21 Sept.	Bavarian	5 Oct., 9 a.m.
28 Sept.	California	12 Oct., 5 a.m.
5 Oct.	Tamiami	19 Oct., 9 a.m.
12 Oct.	Parisian	26 Oct., 6 a.m.
19 Oct.	Bavarian	2 Nov., 9 a.m.
26 Oct.	California	9 Nov., 6 a.m.

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