

LEAGUE OF THE SACRED HEART.

General Intention for February. (Named by the Cardinal Protector and blessed by the Pope for all Associates.)

CATHOLIC SEAMEN'S HOMES AND INSTITUTES.

Messenger of the Sacred Heart.

It may be a grand sight, but it is one that calls up a feeling of sadness, when a great ship swings from her dock and sails away on the broad bosom of the ocean until the horizon hides her from view. The little world afloat will be cut off for days, or weeks, or months from all intercourse with their fellow-men ashore, lost sight of on the immense expanse, and placed beyond the help of loving hearts at home.

Those who follow the sea for a livelihood deserve much commiseration from a purely temporal point of view, but are much more to be pitied when their eternal interests are considered. Few of the numberless vessels that put out from port are blessed with the presence of a priest, so that the seamen—and they are constantly exposed to mishap—have, in case of accident, to face death without hope of priestly assistance; and though all their voyages end prosperously, they go through life deprived for the most part of all chance of religious instruction or exhortation.

Nor is their lot much more enviable when they reach their temporary destination. Those who know what a seaport town is are also aware of the thousand and one temptations that await "poor Jack" as he steps ashore. He is met by "land sharks," as he aptly terms them in his own peculiar phraseology, who wheedle him out of his hard-earned wages; he is assailed and harassed by visions of vice on every side and in every shape as soon as he lands. Thus, with every pleasure soliciting him, and with no friend to advise or sacramental succor, he is in imminent danger of being lured to the shipwreck of his soul.

And yet there is no better soil for the seed of grace than the strong, manly soul of the sailor, whom danger calls back so readily to the thought of God, and to whose character stern discipline in the discharge of duty and a life of hardship have imparted the finest temper. He is inured to suffering and ready at all times for acts of self-sacrifice and heroism. In many a Jack tar there is wherewith to make a saint, and in all, resources enough for good and fervent Christians.

These same ideas found expression in other and more forcible words in the American Messenger, when in May, 1880, six months or so before the Canadian Messenger saw the light, the Holy Father enjoined on the Associates of the League to pray for the Men of the Sea: "Great, indeed, is their needs, and miscellaneous the spiritual supplies for which there is very reasonable demand, in their behalf. And first of all it may be stated that the world at large seems to be either very little aware or very strangely forgetful of the immense numbers of human beings who live by the sea and spend their time upon the waters. The fishermen upon all coasts easily count up to hundreds of thousands. The crews of merchantmen, whalers and other craft may safely be reckoned among the millions; whilst the ocean-steamer and naval fleets of all nationalities may be regarded as so many populous villages and towns.

All these men are habitually exposed to many dangers and, with very few exceptions, are far removed from the opportunities of divine worship and the help of the sacraments. The surroundings amid which they live, though of themselves fitted to awaken a feeling of awe and to turn the thoughts towards the Creator of the vast and wondrous billows, become so familiar to them by custom, that they scarcely arouse a sentiment of anything beyond what is seen. And even though the Psalmist, in the ecstasy of his delight over the wonderful works of God, appeals to the men of the sea as witnesses who can furnish strong evidence, it is greatly to be feared that the witnesses are painfully slow in forthcoming.

"They that go down to the sea in ships, doing business in the great waters: these have seen the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. He said the word and there arose a storm of wind: and they went up to the heavens and they went down to the depths and they cried to the Lord in their affliction." (Psalm cxviii, 23-28)

Unfortunately there is scarcely any class of men reputed to be so reckless in behavior or so little open to the impression of holy thoughts and outbursts of thanksgiving to the Creator as the men who go down to the sea in ships. Sailors are seldom looked upon as good patterns of Christian demeanor; and it is only in cases of imminent shipwreck that they seem to be, according to the necessity of calling upon the Lord, saying: "Thy way is in the sea, and Thy paths in many waters." (Psalm lxxvi, 20.) Indeed, it is even said that, in the midst of the mightiest storms, seamen show a special forgetfulness of the Lord above them whom the winds and the waves obey. Sailors, in fact, have a bad name for recklessness, profanity and general misconduct.

Now, it is always worth while to remember that, with regard to sailors as well as to other classes of men—professions, trades, religious orders and congregations—common repute is not to be held as the faithful exponent of the infallible guide of correct judgment. The men of the sea have their faults, it is true, but they have their many great virtues as well. Look at that graceful ship weighing anchor

and about to sail for her far-off haven! From the moment she clears her dock until she lies at mooring in her port of destination, the men of the sea are at their several posts of duty. During the whole voyage they so manage that, at every single moment of the day or night, some one is on the lookout for dangers ahead, some one is steadily keeping watch to guide the ship direct on her course, many are busy in keeping her decks clean, and her sails well set to catch the favoring breeze. They watch for indications from the sun and the moon and the stars. They make their soundings and test the temperature of the water. They are always under the very strictest discipline, working and eating and resting according to the most exact rules, giving their thoughts and their time, their care and their labor, both individually and in combination, to the one great end and aim—to keep the ship in fit condition, to guide her ever onward to the port. And, in carrying out their purpose, it seems true to say that there is no class of men who work with greater earnestness or more unremitting toil than sailors during a voyage. Idleness seems to have no dwelling-place on board ship. Yet theirs is not the dogged sullenness of labor sometimes to be observed in workers in mines, in whom the very sinews and muscles seem to be stimulated by the overmastering greed of gain. Oh, no; your rollicking, jolly tar seasons his labors with mirth and song, and seems to glory in his 'life on the ocean wave,' for its own sake. Splendid, cheerful, hard working, painstaking, honest-hearted fellows are the men of the sea."

Messengers, in other languages, recommended, on the part of the Holy Father, the same intention to the Members of the Apostleship throughout the world. The mode of expression varied, but the train of thought was much the same. All acknowledged that little hitherto had been done for Catholic sailors as a class; all admitted that they were much exposed to dangers of every description, and concluded that they stood in need of special help. The word went out; and the subject of urgent prayers before the God who stills the tempests on the bosom of the ocean as well as in human hearts. The intention of the month of May, 1890, produced great results.

If ever we needed a proof of the efficacy of the prayers of the League in union with the Sacred Heart, we would find a striking one in what followed. The great maritime nations were naturally foremost in the matter. The subject was taken up first, we believe, by the Catholics of England; but the credit of opening the first Catholic Seamen's Club may be rightfully claimed by the Branch of the Catholic Truth Society of Montreal. During the autumn and winter of 1892 the project was thoroughly discussed and plans were matured; and though the resources were insignificantly small, the following spring, that is, in the last week of April, 1893, relying on God's help and on the promised assistance of a few charitably-disposed persons, the work was inaugurated. In the September number of the Canadian Messenger the auspicious event was thus placed on record: "By a happy coincidence, almost upon the twenty fifth anniversary of its foundation, Montreal has inaugurated a work, destined, it is hoped, to obtain the happiest results. To this old Catholic port have ships from distant seas, ever since Jacques Cartier sailed thither from St. Malo, bringing mariners from every land. And yet, there has been no place where Catholic seamen might feel themselves at home. With commendable zeal, Protestants have established a home, which is made as attractive as possible. But prayer-meetings and the ministrations of Protestant clergymen make it impossible for conscientious Catholics to frequent such an establishment.

"A room has been now procured, and facing upon the river front is the sign 'Catholic Sailors' Club.' It is under the patronage of the Catholic Truth Society and other laymen, assisted by an influential committee of ladies. This room is thrown open to Catholic sailors of all nationalities. Games are played there, stationery of every sort, and most of all literature. In course of time, a library will, no doubt, be established. Meantime, newspapers and periodicals, chiefly Catholic, are provided in abundance, either to read at the Club or to carry away upon foreign service. Who can estimate the blessing of such provision? Reading, the most powerful of all influences, rendered safe, wholesome, instructive. Cards will be posted upon the walls of the Club and in the cabins of ships, announcing the hours of Mass, when and where confessions will be heard, the location of churches, and where French or English speaking priests may be found. In course of time, as the work grows, lodgings may be provided for sailors, or at least they will be directed to suitable stopping places, by members of the Catholic Truth Society and others.

"The attendance, at the Home, since its opening, some three months since, has been such as to prove the necessity for such an institute. At the very first meeting, the sailors, while expressing their gratitude, declared that they had often wondered on ship-board why Catholics were so indifferent to them, though so many of their numbers were ever eager to come to their assistance. The proverbially generous heart of the sailor seems profoundly touched by what has already been done for him. His evident gratification is, indeed, a reward for those who have assisted in the new enterprise. At one of the first meetings, some fifty

sailors—all Catholics who were then in port—met, and passed a series of resolutions thanking all who had a share in founding the Club. "A formal opening of the room was held on the 30th May at which there was, first of all, a numerous attendance of sailors. The ladies of the Committee, the members of the Catholic Truth Society and a number of prominent citizens were present. Speeches explanatory of the object of the work were made by Dr. (now Sir William) Hingston, Hon. J. Curran, solicitor general; Mr. Martineau, who had been deputed by the Mayor; Messrs Casgrain, Sempie, McNamee and John Fealy, President of the Catholic Truth Society. Rev. Father Hudon, S. J., rector of St. Mary's college, and Father Jones, S. J., appeared on the platform. Music in which the sailors took part, and the serving of refreshments enlivened the evening. Those present were most enthusiastic in support of a movement which opens out so wide a field for good. New donations of money were made to the work, with promise of more, which served to stimulate the efforts of those who have thus far succeeded in interesting a large section of the public.

"Since that auspicious event of May 30th, the work has gone on prospering, and the attendance has steadily increased. Every Thursday evening a concert has been given, in which the sailors themselves have taken part. Several of the city church choirs have kindly volunteered their services, and have already, in no slight degree, contributed to the success of these entertainments. "These musical treats are intended to act as a counter attraction to the many dives and low resorts which abound in the neighborhood, where music and intoxicants are freely dispensed, and poor Jack is lured to his ruin. Such are the main features of the work now undertaken for the first time by the Catholics of Montreal. "This is a cause in which all may interest themselves. All nationalities, since sailors of various nations already frequent the club; all parishes, for he beside the approval of His Grace the Archbishop and most of the parochial clergy, it has been placed on such a basis that all have a share in its workings. It belongs to no parish, or congregation, or society, or confraternity. Those at a distance may give a helping hand by offerings, even the smallest, of money, of Catholic literature, even by the aims of their prayers. Those near at hand can do no more serviceable work for the great cause, *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, than by actively occupying themselves with the welfare of the sailors."

From what precedes, we see that there was no hesitation and no misgivings; that the good people of Montreal were thoroughly in earnest; that the clearly marked out, and that much was accomplished in practically carrying out the plan proposed and in a remarkably short time. Four years have since elapsed, and each succeeding season has been marked by some improvement introduced for the entertainment, comfort or moral benefit of our seamen. The concerts are still kept up; the distribution of devotional books and articles of piety, such as beads and scapulars, has been increased; temperance pledges are still given to a great number; contributions are received, as formerly, from all parts of Canada; the number of visits of sailors to the Club has risen, during the last year, to the unprecedented figure of 17,000; 1,000 belong to the League, which forms here a special branch under the title of "Apostleship of the Sea."

Some new features have been added since the first year or so of the existence of the Club. Every Sunday evening the sailors join in the way of the Cross, while the pictures of the Stations are thrown upon a screen; a devout expedition has been found to appeals strongly and in a sensible manner to the piety of the sailor. At the close of a meeting, confessions are heard. A special ward in Notre Dame Hospital is always a Jack's disposal, and should he, through sickness, be obliged to avail himself of such provision, he can count upon the faithful attendance of his chaplain, on visits of the charitable Ladies of the Committee, and on every comfort Christian kindness can suggest. And if it be God's will that he should die, far from home and family, he yet will die among friends; and on the mountain side, in the Catholic cemetery, a Christian burial awaits him, with the last sad but hope in the heart of Holy Church, for, through the influence of the Committee, a plot of ground has been set apart for Catholic seamen. The greatest material advance, however, was recorded in the short history of the Club, when instead of the old room a spacious building was leased, at great expense, for the better accommodation of Catholic sailors visiting this port. Though still in a condition of inferiority, when we consider the well furnished and roomy quarters which our Protestant fellow-citizens are able to place at the disposal of seafaring men, the painful contrast is far less noticeable now than formerly. The Protestant Sailors' Home, it must be remembered, has been in operation for the last thirty years, so it is not to be wondered at that their financial condition should be more prosperous than our own. The great business firms controlled by Protestants are much more numerous and wealthy than those under Catholic management; they all contribute liber-

ally to their own work; while the proceeds of collections taken up in the transatlantic liners—though Catholic and Protestant passengers are appealed to alike—have heretofore all been turned over to their treasurer. These moneys, and whatever other sums are realized by concerts and dramatic entertainments, held during the ocean passage, go to swell their building fund, now amounting to many thousands of dollars. At this stage of our work it would seem to be an imperative duty of influential Catholics to take some measures looking to a more equitable distribution of sums thus collected for that is misleadingly termed the benefit of the Sailors' Institute in Montreal."

Protestants, all the world over, with praiseworthy zeal have ever been on the alert to secure donations for their "Sailors' Saug Homes," or "Retreats," for their hospital and missionary ships at the fishing banks, and for their innumerable club rooms in every port. Their conduct in this respect is highly commendable; but is it not rather humiliating, when in contrast with so much activity, we are forced to consider the apathy of Catholics, as displayed until now, in similar matters? Thank God, there is an awakening of late years, and the cause of Catholic seamen has been zealously taken up in other countries beside our own. Since the Montreal Club was started, several great seaports in the United States can boast of similar institutions. Catholic sailors may now find their wants provided for in French and even some Spanish and Italian ports. But the ideal of a Seamen's Home has been more perfectly realized by our fellow Catholics in England than elsewhere. The subjoined clipping, from the London Tablet, July 3, 1897, may serve to show what has been effected in the world's commercial metropolis: "The Committee which has undertaken the heavy responsibility of providing a home for Catholic seamen in the port of London opened new premises on Wednesday afternoon, at 10 Wellesloe square, Leman street, E. It is not merely a place of recreation for Jack ashore; but he receives board and lodging, the use of reading rooms and library, and is able to breathe a clean and wholesome atmosphere, free from the temptations which would otherwise beset him and all at a cost to himself of 15s. a week. There are 27 cubicles—but it would require 32 cubicles to be in use to make them remunerative—each fitted up with a good bed, etc. Over the door of each is the name of some patron saint. Mr. Raikes, informed us that these cubicles were the gifts of separate donors, the cost of each cubicle being £4. Besides his bedroom the seaman receives, in the way of board, four good meals a day, including with ham and eggs, tea, coffee, bread, butter, marmalade, etc., for breakfast; substantial joint, vegetable and pudding for dinner; tea similar to breakfast, and a supper of gruel or rice. The total cost of the premises is estimated at £500, of which a sum of £200 has been borrowed and the remaining £300 is yet buried in the charitable hands of future benefactors, lying there, it is hoped, at substantial interest. The whole undertaking has received the blessing of the Holy Father, which is inscribed, framed and set up, plain for all to see, in a prominent place on the walls of the new recreation hall, which on Wednesday was tastefully decorated with the flags of all nations hung round the walls. A brilliant company of ladies and gentlemen was assembled to give the enterprise a good 'send off,' and if numbers and distinction count for their worth, there need be no anxiety on the part of the Committee to restrain them in their noble efforts."

"The Count de Torre Diaz, the President of the Committee, introduced His Eminence Cardinal Archbishop to open the new premises, which he did in a speech full of encouragement and congratulation. He felicitated them on the present success of the work they began three years ago. It was a matter of importance, not only to seamen in the port of London, but it was an example to Catholics all over the world. Lately, in Italy, he had made enquiries, and the Patriarch of Venice and the Archbishops of Naples, and Genoa were willing and anxious to promote the movement for the protection and comfort of seamen frequenting those ports. Adverting to the Royal Navy he said that a great number of Catholic sailors were in the English Navy for whom no provision was made. He did not object to the great advantages which the Admiralty conferred on the Church of England, but what was good for others was good for the Catholic sailor too. He felt that there was recognition being made of the needs of Catholics, but provisions of a greater kind ought and would be made. He did not expect chaplains afloat with every squadron, but they ought to have chaplains at stations where squadrons called. The matter required organization and careful watching, but it could be done. "A beginning had been made, and no doubt their rights would be established. But Catholics must show themselves interested. They had been guilty of neglect and lethargy in the past in regard to the wants of their seamen; an awakening had now taken place. They had in fact been forced into activity for the protection of their own Catholic sailors by what had been benevolently done by others. Homes were established, chiefly religious, in which Bible reading and prayer meetings took a prominent place, in which things Catholic men could take no part, and it became necessary to make suitable provision for them. In the

short time they had been at work 2,000 sailors had passed through their home, and now they hoped to have a great many more. The men had not religious trust down their throats, but they were in a good Catholic atmosphere where every facility was provided for them to do their duty. Moreover he believed the home was open to non-Catholics. "His Eminence spoke then of the advantages which the literary department afforded by making up packets of literature for sailors, which at sea often became a source of providential instruction to them. The Count de Torre Diaz moved a vote of thanks to His Eminence, which was seconded by Canon Akers and carried with acclamation. Mr. Raikes gave a history of the work and appealed for financial aid, after which the company made a tour of inspection through the building and were entertained with orchestral music and light refreshments."

In the partial list of gentlemen and ladies present, as given in the Tablet, we find many members of the foreign and the English nobility; members of the secular clergy and of the religious orders, Dominicans, Jesuits, Oblates and others. We take this as an evidence of the general interest awakened in all classes for the work of Catholic Seamen. But the present account of the work at large would be lacking in one of its most important and interesting features if we omitted to call attention to the great and noble efforts made in France to better the spiritual and bodily condition of the poor fishermen of the Banks. A missionary and hospital ship had indeed been fitted out, but scarcely had she joined the fishing fleet when she was wrecked on the rock-bound coast of Newfoundland. Nothing daunted, the generous hearts of French Catholics replaced her, the following season, by two new vessels built expressly and better adapted to the charitable errand they were to accomplish. God alone knows the full extent of good that will be effected by such pious munificence, and the greatness of the reward He holds in reserve for such admirable perseverance despite a first venture which ended in disaster. The Montreal institution, as our Associates may have remarked, is kept up by the voluntary contributions of the citizens; its prosperity, not to say existence, is consequently precarious. We have no doubt but that all other institutions of the kind are similarly circumstanced. Two ways might be suggested, both necessary, to ensure the stability of our several desultory undertakings: the establishment of a local and of a general organization, on the lines, perhaps, of the great work of the Propagation of the Faith. Catholics becoming members of the local organization would impose on themselves a fixed tax, in keeping with their means, to be levied yearly. A small percentage of the proceeds would go to establishing a common fund to be administered by the general organization. The latter would extend to all the Catholic world, and its headquarters would be fixed upon by mutual agreement of the local organizations. It goes without saying that this implies the formation of an international committee, one capable of giving a stronger impulse and a surer direction to the whole work and to the various seaport or naval chaplains. Quarterly or yearly reports, sent to existing centres, would encourage all members in the prosecution of the good work, would show what is being done elsewhere, and would bring to their notice exceptional cases of hardship or difficulties encountered. Would it not be advisable also to adopt a flag, of simple and appropriate design, to be carried at the mast-head of missionary ships and hoisted over clubs, institutes or homes? It would catch the eye of a jack-tar far sooner than any printed signboard, especially if the same device as that on the flag were used as a heading for the pledge cards, church service cards, letter paper, etc., distributed at the Club rooms. The colors alone might be made to vary, if deemed advisable, according to the different nationalities. We recommend once more to all Associates, in the name of the Holy Father, this eminently Catholic and charitable work.

PRAYER O Jesus! through the most pure Heart of Mary, I offer Thee all the prayers, work and sufferings of this day, for all the intentions of Thy Divine Heart, in union with the holy sacrifice of the Mass in reparation of

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all sins, and for all requests presented through the Apostleship of Prayer: in particular for the continued prosperity and greater extension of the Catholic work in behalf of the men of the sea. Amen. "All donations intended for the Catholic Seamen's Club should be directed to Rev. E. J. Devine, S. J., who is at present the Chaplain of the Catholic Seamen's Club and who resides at St. Mary's College, Bleury Street, Montreal.

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