

## GILLETT'S LYE

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### LETTER FROM FATHER FRASER

Da Wang, Feb. 7, 1917

Dear Friends,—I am keeping up my reputation of a building a church every year. Today I laid the corner-stone of the first Catholic Church in this town of Da Wang or surrounding region. It was raining whilst performing the ceremony and while I tried to take a picture of the stone and foundation, and now it is snowing as I try to grasp the pen in this cold left—the only place of worship the poor people of Da Wang have had up till now. There are no window panes—just tissue paper and that full of holes. No fire of course, no ceiling, but only loose tiles and the snow is blowing through them and falling on me and the table as I write. At one end of the place is the altar and in the other my bed and that of my acolyte. I visited all the homes of the Christians. The people are miserably poor. The houses are nearly all minus a wall or roof. One man showed me his ox that had died that very morning. Another said that his died recently. There is an epidemic among the oxen, twenty or thirty have died during the winter. An ox costs about twenty dollars—a regular fortune for these poor people who only earn ten cents a day. No cattle are raised for food, they are too poor for that. The oxen are used for plowing and pumping water to irrigate the rice fields. They are housed under the same roof with their owners for fear of being stolen and also for want of room elsewhere. The pagans attribute the plague among the oxen to the devil. I asked them that they fed the cattle on during the winter. They said "Straw." "I am convinced," said I, "that that is the reason of the many deaths, straw is too dry for the beasts." "But we boil it," they argued, "before giving it to them." "If you yourselves," I returned, "ate rice during the summer and only bran during the winter do you think you could stand it, without getting sick; you ought to give them hay instead of straw." This was quite new to them, but I think I convinced them and they will try the experiment next year.

I found quite a number of boys and girls in the different families I visited growing up without instruction and ordered them to go to Taichowfu immediately where they will be trained in the Christian religion by pious nuns and masters, make their first Communion and receive confirmation. They were delighted to accept the invitation. Really, there is no hope for them if they are left in this pagan town in their tender years. Devil worship and idolatry are continually being practised and all sorts of bad examples. Only last night I saw a procession go by—a big long dragon was being paraded to the sound of drums and in many open temples could be seen adults and children offering incense to the idols.

To get to Da Wang I had to make a journey of thirty miles over the mountains. One pass was seven miles long and so very high it took us four hours to make the ascent and descent. In places we walked along the edge of steep precipices and gullies hundreds of feet deep. At one place called The Bridge of the Immortals, a huge mass in the confasion laid the remnants of an earlier world. I attempted to take a photograph. I thought the place was a solitude but in a twinkling I was surrounded by a big crowd of curious people—wherever they came from I don't know—eager to see the wonderful foreign invention which they had heard of but probably never seen before. They were good-natured and polite and some of them at my suggestion climbed the rocks and came away from the human species, not a wonder, for four hundred millions are crowded into a space only half the size of the United States!

My visit to Da Wang will mean a score more of bright-eyed, smiling-faced little boys and girls in my free boarding schools of Taichowfu. This town has been fruitful in vocations for the priesthood. I have sent a half a dozen of its boys to the seminary during the past few years and the thought that these levites will have a decent place in which to say their first Mass added not a little to my consolation in laying the corner-stone today. The church will be dedicated to St. Teresa.

Next Sunday I say Mass for the first time in the new church of the Sacred Heart in Sandglinding which is now finished. The faithful are to come from all the surrounding villages for the opening.

I have placed a catechist, as I promised in a recent letter, in the place I took supper as you remember on my midnight sick call. Since I wrote that letter, strange to say, the Protestants who have had a

well-attended chapel there for the last thirty years, have dismissed their native minister and do not intend to place another! I even hear that the foreign minister who has charge of all that region intends soon to go back to Europe.

How good is God not only to preserve the missions we had before the War but also to enable us to open others and how thankful I am to you, my dear friends, for cooperating with Divine Providence in this apostolic work.

Although I do not write a letter of thanks for each donation appearing in the RECORD be assured that I read all your names with a heart full of gratitude and pray for all your intentions.

Yours gratefully in Jesus and Mary.  
J. M. FRASER

### MEXICAN "PEONAGE"

By Eber Cole Blyam in Extension Magazine

The subject of "peonage" in Mexico is one that has been variously stated by American writers, and usually with the main purpose in view of making something spectacular out of it. The American people have always pretended a huge sympathy with "down-trodden and oppressed peoples," and particularly so when a revolution has been started on this pretext, and the further excuse that somebody has been "enslaved." Therefore, they have listened with melancholy pleasure to the tales of Mexican "industrial oppression," because such tales agreed with and excited their sympathy.

For "business" reasons, such conditions as those existing within the borders of the United States are not discussed; in fact, they are very unpopular subjects among a certain brand of politicians—principally Southern.

Peonage has been widely advertised during the last six years of revolutionary activity in Mexico, and has been offered as one of the great contributing causes to the upheaval which has turned that unfortunate country into a shambles. It has been held up before the American people as being universal in that country, and it has been taken for granted that the "victims" of the system were practically slaves, and that it was, in fact, the common lot of all Mexican laborers.

The word "peon" in the Spanish language means "a person on foot," and generally one employed in unskilled day labor. A section-hand on the railroad, a pick and shovel man in excavation work, etc., would be termed a "peon." It is with this meaning that the word is used in Mexico and it does not in any sense imply servitude.

"Peonage" in the Spanish language means "a multitude of people on foot." . . . The body of peones who work at once on the same place." This word "peonage" has been borrowed by Americans, who have attached to it a meaning not its own. This was done to give name to a system existing universally throughout the Southern States of the United States. It is a system whereby the laborer is given an advance of wages or credit, which he later pays back in labor or in crops, or both. Its operation necessarily permits of evil practices; it is wholly indefensible, and the greatest loser by it has always been the planter who extended the credit. In Mexico the laborers in certain localities are accustomed to it and have always insisted upon it. In other sections of Mexico it is altogether unknown.

As a matter of fact, the peonage districts of Mexico are quite unfamiliar with it. Indeed, it may be said that its practice is much less in proportion to the population in Mexico than it is in proportion to population in the United States.

The Southern negro in the United States is well known for his characteristic of working only part time. He receives his wages Saturday night and does not show up until the following Wednesday. It is so in Mexico. The Mexican is content with a small sum for his maintenance, and with this he need work only part time. It, therefore, happens that when the laborer calls for a loan or an advance of credit at the store, he becomes party to a contract that calls for him to labor the ordinary working days of the week until his debt is paid. To those at all familiar with Southern labor conditions it is a matter of common knowledge that negroes can not be depended upon for work unless they are "in at the store." The abuses possible in such a system are obvious.

In portions of the States of Vera Cruz, Tabasco, Chiapas and Campeche, peonage, or the system of advancing wages to farm laborers, was common. The laborers insisted upon these advances as a preliminary to engaging to work, and their only complaints about the system were those occasioned by the disin-

### THE CALL TO ARMS

A call has gone forth to every American Catholic to join in a Crusade of Grace for the welfare of our country and spread of the faith in our midst on the occasion of the three hundredth anniversary of the death of America's first saint—Rose of Lima. This anniversary occurs on the 30th day of August, and will be commemorated during the ensuing year with great splendor in the saint's native Peru.

Those who join the Crusade volunteer to offer up for our beloved country and our priceless faith Masses, Holy Communion, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, rosaries and other good works. The number of times any of these good works are performed should be carefully noted, so that at the end of the century year we may lay at the feet of St. Rose a concrete testimonial of our faith in God and our love for and trust in her. Therefore, all those who join the Crusade are asked to send their lists of good works to The Rosary Magazine, 871 Lexington Avenue, New York City.

In these perilous days it is not necessary to urge upon every patriotic person the necessity of prayers for the welfare of our land. Preparedness is in everybody's mouth now, and the nation is really beginning to bestir itself to put itself on an adequate military basis. But the arms of man cannot avail unless supported by stout hearts, clean hearts, hearts that trust in God. And our trust in God will be all the greater if we know that there are before His throne powerful intercessors joining their prayers with ours. Now, of all the saints, none possibly takes as great an interest in America as Rose of Lima, the first flower of sanctity to bud in this western Hemisphere. Therefore in this Crusade of Grace we ask her in a most especial manner to watch over our land.

The second great object of the Crusade is to pray for the spread of the Faith in our country. Religion is the only bulwark of any nation. Catholics know that there is only one true religion, and that in proportion as that religion spreads and takes root the future safety of our land and its ideals will be guaranteed. It is for this reason that devout and patriotic Catholics pour forth prayers to the throne of the Almighty for the conversion of those who have not the full light of God's truth. St. Rose, by the example of her life and by her prayers has helped many of her countrymen to a knowledge of the truth. She is interested in the spread of the Faith in this country because being the first saint of the American Church, she cannot but wish to see the life of grace become more and more operative amongst us.

Every Catholic is therefore kindly invited, may urged, to join in the Crusade with a right good heart. Talk about it to your friends, because it is something which will appeal to every patriotic Catholic.

Under the banner of St. Rose, during this anniversary year, Catholics

will be glad to march to the feet of the Great White Throne, asking for her sake a blessing upon our land, and a quickening of life in the American Church.

The reward of a thing well done is to have done it.

"No beauty can come without time and trouble. Even the flower which seems to bloom without effort has lain long underground in the shape of the seed, which perished before it could be born. Nor is it otherwise with souls. To endure injustice without answering back with hatred, to endure grief without having the spirit broken, to endure disappointment and yet to go cheerfully on these things make character."

As a matter of fact, the system was gradually disappearing from Mexico, and in time doubtless would have been found as in the United States, only in those sections noted for their ignorance and backwardness.

To urge peonage as a pretext for revolution in Mexico is an exceedingly dangerous precedent for Americans, especially for those living in the Southern States. If Mexico deserved a revolution because some of its ignorant laborers were in "peonage," the same can be urged with much greater justice for the negroes in the Southern States. In those commonwealths the blacks are "peones" to an extent involving vastly worse conditions and vastly greater numbers than was ever dreamed of in Mexico.

As indicating the labor conditions in our own Southern States, the following advertisement appearing in the Atlanta Journal, May 8, 1914, is illuminating:

"\$25 REWARD

For return of Walker Banks, yellow negro, about twenty-five to twenty-eight years old, about five feet ten inches tall, weight 240 or 250 pounds, raised at East Point, thick lips, and has big eyes. Will pay \$25 for this negro delivered to Estes Bros., Gay, Georgia."

How would Southern politicians like to see a revolution started by Socialistic agitators among the blacks of the South, which would have as its object the cancelling of all debts and the killing or driving out of all the big land owners and the division of their properties among the negro revolutionaries? Such an enterprise surely would be very unpopular among the Southern aristocracy. It would be especially so if some foreign government were to arm the blacks and coddle their Socialistic leaders and condone their bloody deeds. If, in addition to this, the foreign government were to assist in the overthrow of the established government at Washington, it would be called the vilest act ever committed by one State against another. For an unprejudiced mind possessing a knowledge of current history, the parallel need be extended no further.

A cheerful face is nearly as good for an invalid as pleasant weather.—Franklin.

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