

Mary, and place themselves under the mantle of her maternal love.

In the celebration of this feast no expense is spared. With lavish spirit of religious chivalry, in every garrison city, in every military centre throughout the kingdom and its foreign dependencies, — wherever a Spanish soldier is stationed to-day — the most elaborate preparations are made to add eclat to the grand ceremonial of the religious celebration. Ancient tapestries, priceless heirlooms of many noble houses, are unearthed from the museums to drape the walls of the churches; the floral wealth of the cities are unstintingly contributed, the most valuable orchids are generously supplied to beautify the altars; the sanctuary is one blaze of lights with its thousand of lighted tapers. But the most conspicuous decoration is made with all the trophies of war, all the insignia of military life. Bayonets and drums, swords and shields, cannon and lances, guns and spears, flags and banners, are artistically arranged, forming exquisitely constructed chandeliers, shrines, pedestals and columns in honor of the Immaculate Queen.

Not content with this tribute of homage, music and oratory are invited to add their artistic charms to this great military feast. The most popular and celebrated choirs are called to interpret the grand masses of the masters. Gounod's "Messe Solennelle" is a favorite, as it gives such welcome opportunity to military bands and invited musicians to form full orchestras, whose matchless performances are the grand "Te Deum" of the festivity.

The most distinguished orators of the peninsula, such eloquent men as Father Marcellus de la Pay, of the Jesuit house of San Sebastian, Father Ludovico, the Carmelite, Father Paulino Alvarez, the Dominican, Father Noyes, the Franciscan, and in Madrid the distinguished Court Chaplain, the Bishop of Zion, occupy the pulpits on this day.

All the immediate friends, relatives and admirers of the national forces are invited, and these, with the ordinary congregations which this holiday of obligation brings to the churches, fill every available work of our large basilicas.

To add a finishing touch to this interesting picture, so unique in its beauty to

heighten the gorgeousness of the ceremonial, to crown the pious aspirations of the valiant soldiers, to cheer him on the eve of his departure to the far distant battlefields of Cuba, to complete his happiness on this great feast, royalty, with its brilliant suite, the rich dresses of the ladies vying in dazzling splendor with the elegant military costumes, honors the brave troops with its august presence. Thus it fosters among the soldiers that love of religion, that devotion to the Immaculate Queen of Carmel, which is so eminently practised by the illustrious Queen Regent, the august Infantas and the whole Royal Household.

The pious sentiments of the noble Queen Regent, find their highest gratification and reward for the Royal patronage bestowed on the troops, when she subsequently learns many a sweet miracle of conversion that was wrought, unseen to human eye beneath the kindling sunshine of the Church's glorious ceremonial.

Yes, these days of religious festivity are often pioneers of grace to many a brave soldiers' heart, in whom the distractions of the service, and the poisonous atmosphere of the guardroom have prematurely debilitated the supernatural health, which once danced so innocently in his veins when he roamed the glens and mountains of his native province.

This day recalls all the good resolutions of his boyhood, which have been shipwrecked so sadly in the promiscuous companionship of the barrack. Once more he struggles to climb the rugged mountain on the road to heaven, and the magnificence of the military services in the churches acts as a potent magic to draw him to God. For, "beautiful" as they are "before Almighty God, sweet to His taste and music to His ear," they become inexhaustible fountains of grace and Divine mercy.

When we behold the long lines of infantry prostrate before the altar, at the elevation of their arms placed as trophies around the sanctuary, the incense arising amidst the exquisite music of the military bands, in a cloud of praise and thanksgiving, symbolical of the fervent prayers welling forth from the lips of priest and soldier, when we see religion and the army entwined, as it were, in one affectionate embrace, our hearts are ravished at this