

THE MOST REVEREND J. S. ALEMANY, O. P.

First Archbishop of San Francisco.

There is no history more interesting, no romance more fascinating, no tragedy more touching than the record of the lives and labors of the first missionaries sent from Spain to christianize California. And, indeed, of them much has been recorded, though still more left unsaid. Historian and novelist, poet and painter, have all drawn abundant material from the deeds of Junipero Serra and his noble band of followers; whose joys and sorrows, conquests and persecutions have come to be regarded as inseparably connected with the literature of the Golden West.

But few and far between are the tributes paid to another class of missionaries, the apostles of the State of California; the heroes who tended and watered with their tears the young and struggling Church—the pioneer priests of the archdiocese of San Francisco. They were sons of almost every nation in Europe. Among them were Irishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, Belgians, Italians and Spaniards. Side by side they labored, unmindful of racial differences, intent only upon the accomplishment of one common end, the propagation of Christ's true Church. But as an army, powerful through it be, can accomplish little without a strong central figure planning the ma-

neuvers and guiding the attacks; neither can the forces of the Church pitted against error and falsehood, emerge victorious unless a master hand direct her movements.

And never was this need more keenly felt than in California at the dawn of the second half of the nineteenth century. The country was part of the vast territory wrested from Mexico at the close of the war of 1847. The two chief factors comprising its population, the Spanish-Mexican element and the Americans, were in constant disagreement. Add to this the discovery of gold in 1848, which attracted immigrants from every part of the known world. Chaos reigned supreme. There was neither God nor ruler for the "forty niner." Such were conditions when on September the ninth, 1850, California entered the Union and law and order began once more to dwell along the Pacific slope.

The American hierarchy which met at Baltimore in 1849, saw at once the absolute necessity of ecclesiastical organization, and of a genius capable of directing it. They petitioned Rome; and her reponse was a leader such as the clergy and faithful of California found in the subject of this sketch. True there had been a

bishop in that region prior to American occupation, but the Right Reverend Francisco García Diego y Moreno, O. F. M., had gone to his reward on April 30th, 1846, leaving the diocese to be ruled by a Vicar.

Joséph Sadoc Alemany was born July 13th, 1814, at Vich, an episcopal city in the Province of Tarragona, Spain. He received his early education in the schools, which but a short time before had rung with the triumphs of Jaime Balmes, one of the greatest intellectual luminaries of the nineteenth century, and while still a youth sought and obtained admission to the Order of Friars Preachers.

When in 1835, Christine of Spain, at the instigation of the Jewish minister Mendizabal, issued the decree of secularization or banishment from the realm, the Dominicans were among the first to feel the weight of this cruel law. Their Churches, Priors, Houses of Studies and Novitiates were forced to close their doors and the Religious ruthlessly scattered broadcast over the continent of Europe. Those not yet ordained betook themselves to Rome, where they could continue in safety their interrupted studies. Among these was young Alemany. For two years he read theology under the Masters for whom the convent of La Quercia near Viterbo was justly famed, and in 1837 he was raised to the priesthood by Bishop,

afterwards Cardinal, Pianetto. According to several historians Father Alemany acted for a time as sub-master of novices at Viterbo, but was later transferred to Rome where he became assistant rector of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, now the titular church of Cardinal Farley.

It was not long however before the young Spaniard felt the flame of divine love urging him on to follow in the footsteps of Saint Dominic, and to devote his life to the service of the foreign missions. Obedient to the call he begged the Master General to send him to the Philippines. The sacrifice was accepted, but under religious obedience the field of his future activities was changed to the United States where the harvest was great and the laborers few. Father Alemany did not hesitate an instant, for to him the voice of the superior was the voice of God. He had found his destiny. The ocean, the wilderness, the solitude—nothing daunted him. And in the early spring of 1840 he left Italy for his new post.

At that date the Province of Saint Joseph embraced Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee. In convenient localities central stations had been established, whence the light of Faith radiated through all the country around. Hence the priests would set forth on missionary expeditions; hither they retired, as to an asylum, in times of sickness or

when old age laid its heavy hand upon them. Such was St. Joseph's convent Somerset, Ohio, where our future bishop began his labors. He applied himself assiduously to the study of the English language, and ministered to the spiritual needs of the simple Catholics who dwelt in that vicinity. The quiet atmosphere was most congenial to him. For peace and harmony dwelt within the little parish; and so edifying was the demeanor of the faithful that the Fathers in their letters abroad make frequent mention of it; contrasting the piety of these German and Irish settlers with the tepidity of Catholics of the Old World.

In 1841 he was assigned to Taylorville, Ohio. And to this period belongs what is probably his first English letter, written one year after his arrival in the United States and addressed to the Right Reverend John B. Purcell Bishop of Cincinnati:

"I thought good," he says, "to write you these few lines, and to beg your assistance, since they tell me that you always promised some help when this would be called for: and thus we could have our little church neatly fixed when you would be pleased to visit us. You know besides how strange it is for a priest come from Rome to celebrate Mass in a wooden, unplastered church. However Almighty God has repaid me very well, by giving me the consolation of baptizing two converts. In Zanesville, too, upwards of two dozen have been taken into the Church since your last Visitation."

Nor did his linguistic attain-

ments end here. He could write and speak Spanish, French, Italian and Latin with equal facility, and during the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, 1884, delivered before the assembled Fathers a Latin masterpiece on the Priesthood.

Seventy years ago Tennessee presented one of the most unpromising fields for missionary activity in the country. The faithful were few, poor and scattered—often separated from each other by mountain ranges, which tended to increase the hardships ordinarily endured by priests in the discharge of their pastoral duties. The Dominicans who had entered the field at an early date zealously cooperated with the Bishop in the organization of the diocese. And in 1842, when the curacy at the Cathedral of the Holy Rosary, Nashville, became vacant, Father Alemany was sent from Ohio to assist the saintly Bishop Miles, O. P. During the three years of his labors in Nashville he endeared himself to all. Though small in stature every lineament proclaimed the priest. He was endowed with one of those magnanimous spirits ever ready to spend and to be spent in its efforts to implant faith and morals in the hearts of the people.

From Nashville, in 1845, he went to the neighboring city of Memphis, laboring there until the Provincial Chapter of 1847

assigned him to Kentucky, where he became Novice-Master of Saint Rose Convent. But his talents, which he ever strove to hide, could not long escape the notice of his brother religious, who petitioned the General to make Father Alemany Provincial. A favorable answer was at once returned, and with it came the official documents appointing him superior of all

the Dominicans in the United States. For two years the destinies of the Province of Saint Joseph were guided by the holy man in a spirit of prudence and judgment. But in 1850 an event occurred which was to change completely the heretofore even tenor of his life.—*To be continued.*

Sebastian Bohan, O. P.

HEAVENLY KNOWLEDGE

That burning thirst for knowledge which God places in the soul of every mortal being—which experience has taught us cannot be satisfied during the years of our exile, shall it not be quenched or shall we thirst thus forever? Has God planted a desire for knowledge that shall not be satisfied, commenced a work that He shall not bring to a successful issue? For those who desire “to know”,—and who and where are the persons who do not wish to advance, who are satisfied with their present imperfect, limited knowledge,—these are interesting questions.

If this craving for knowledge were by its nature finite surely the things of this world would satiate it, but, as every day experiences teach, they do not. It is more than finite. It is infinite, and a thing of infinite capacity cannot be filled but by an

Infinite Being, for “abyss calleth unto abyss,” hence we must turn to God to satisfy this infinite craving. Like a spark of fire which by continual fanning grows and spreads until it bursts forth into a mighty flame engulfing all, so this burning thirst for knowledge fanned day by day and year by year shall grow and expand until, shaking the dust from its earthly feet, it shall burst forth in the possession of All,—for God is All. And with this possession of God the soul comes to the realization of that perfect knowledge for which it has been yearning. The light by which knowledge was acquired during a former existence becomes for the soul darkness as compared with the present Light, God, by which it now knows all things. “I shall then know, even as I am known,” says Saint Paul. Our knowledge of God and through Him all things