

The White Fathers

Of all the religious Orders of the Catholic Church (writes the Marquise de Fécenoy) it is doubtful whether there is any one in which the Old World aristocracy is more extensively represented than in that of the White Fathers, founded by the late Cardinal Lavigerie for work in Northern Africa, especially along the southern borders of Algeria, Tunis, Tripoli and Morocco. This Order, which has played a notable role in connection with the promotion of the colonial interests of France, has now, by reason of the latter's new laws aimed against the religious associations, been compelled to leave French territory and to abandon all the splendid work with which it was entrusted by its founder.

Taking advantage thereof, Emperor William has offered a refuge in his dominions to the White Fathers. He has furnished them with sites and subsidies for the construction of a seminary and of a big monastery at Altkirch, in Alsace, which is to serve as headquarters of the Order, and has arranged that every faculty should be given to the Fathers to pursue in the German colonies in Africa, and also in Morocco, where German influence is now paramount, the work which they have until now been doing with so much success in France's African dependencies.

The Order in question may be regarded as the modern embodiment of the Knights of Malta and of the Knights Templar of the crusading days. For it is a military as well as a religious Order, and has sometimes been known as that of the Warrior Monks of the Sahara. The steel helmet of the Knight Templar of the olden days is replaced by one made of cork, with duly patented ventilating apparatus. The visor, instead of being of metal, is of cloth, similar to those worn by the Tuareg Arabs, covering the entire lower portion of the face.

The Object of the Order

is much the same as that of the Knights of Malta of the Middle Ages—namely, the delivery of slaves from bondage and the propagation of Christianity by means not of the Gospel alone, but of the Gospel allied to the sword. Cardinal Lavigerie, who spent almost his entire life in Africa, learnt there that one is indispensable to the other, at any rate among the turbulent and warlike races who inhabit the northern half of the dark continent.

Their Programme

has been to attract sympathy and good-will by the development of the productiveness of the existing oases, and by the creation of new ones, where stations have been formed for the relief of the sick, for the offer of hospitality to all comers, irrespective of creed, and for the refuge and protection of fugitive slaves. They have endeavored to afford to the natives practical demonstration of the benefits and advantages of civilisation, to preach by example the elements thereof, and to thus prepare the ground for conversion to Christianity. The latter, although the principal object, is the last in order. For instead of proselytism preparing the ground for the seeds of civilisation with the White Fathers, it is the elements of civilisation which prepare the ground for the seeds of Christianity.

The headquarters of the Order have until now been at Biskra, on the Algerian borders of the great Sahara desert, on a plantation known by the name of M'Salla, which is the Arab designation for a 'place of prayer,' consisting almost wholly of desert land reclaimed by the monks.

To those who are accustomed to consider the life of a monk as devoted entirely to prayer, fasting, and meditation, the mode of existence of these warrior monks of the Sahara will appear a strange anomaly. Fasting is dispensed with altogether, and the only dietary restrictions imposed upon the monks are that they shall invariably content themselves with the food of the district to which they are assigned. Thus, for instance, in places where it is impossible to obtain bread they have to be satisfied with dried dates.

One of the Principal Features.

of the ceremony of the administration of the vows to the White Fathers consists in the solemn blessing of their arms, of their equipment, of their dromedary mounts and of their attire, or uniform. The latter consists of a long white tunic, descending below the knee, belted at the waist, and with a large red Maltese cross on the breast. The pantaloons are loose and baggy, such as those affected by the Turks of the old school. On the head is a white pith helmet, surmounted on grand occasions by a white plume, and embellished in front with a red Maltese cross.

It should be added that, except when on the move or when working, the monks invariably wear the veil of white or black cloth which is in use among the Tuareg tribes. These veils, which are tied loosely at the back of the head, protect the mouth and the nostrils from the plague of insects.

Dictionary Wisdom

Between 'set' and 'sit' and between 'lay' and 'lie' there is just the difference that there is between a transitive and an intransitive verb (says the 'Rochester Democrat').

The difference may be remembered by committing to memory these two sentences:

'The farmer sets the hen, and the hen sits.'
'Now I lay me down to sleep and soon I shall lie asleep.'

The fact that the preterit of 'lie' is 'lay' probably has caused most of the confusion in the use of these two words; changing the tense of the verbs of the latter sentence, we would have: 'Then I laid me down to sleep, and soon lay asleep.'

The fact that the sun 'sets' instead of 'sits' has caused a good deal of confusion in the use of these words. This 'set,' however, is quite a different word from the other; it is derived from 'settle.' For the preterit, one should remember, 'sit' changes to 'sat' while 'set' remains as it is.

'Shall' and 'will' are words between which many people have hard work to distinguish. The rule for the use of the words is simple, but, simple as it is, it is too long to recollect each time one wants to make use of the future tense, and custom alone will give perfection. The rule, briefly put, is this:

To express simple futurity, use 'shall' in the first person, 'will' in the second and third; to express obligation, use 'will' in the first person, 'shall' in the second and third.

Courtesy, probably (the same courtesy that makes us say 'you' instead of 'thou', causes the French to follow the same rule, and requires the Germans to say 'they' instead of 'thou' or 'you'), is responsible for the use of 'shall' in the first person and 'will' in the others to express simple futurity. 'Shall' originally implied obligation, no matter of what person it was used; people, speaking of themselves, courteously spoke as though they were obliged to do this or that; but, speaking of others, they courteously expressed only the thought that it was the others' intention or will to do this or that. When it became a question of determination or compulsion, then they said of themselves 'We will'; that is, 'We will it'; and of others 'You shall' or 'He shall'; that is, 'You (or he) are obliged to.'

Politeness is the cause of many other absurdities of syntax; and a desire of our forefathers to make certain expressions emphatic is responsible for others. A curious example of an emphatic expression giving rise to an iron rule of grammar is seen in French, in which one says 'Je ne saks pas,' freely translated, 'I do not know,' but literally, 'I do not know (a) step.' We say, 'I won't go a step,' thereby making emphatic our refusal; so did the French of other days; they said it so often that the 'pas' fell naturally into use with all verbs, and to-day there are few expressions in which it can be omitted. It is called 'a double negative'; but it really is a negative plus an emphatic noun.

But which is the more absurd: 'Je ne saks pas,' with its useless 'pas,' or 'I do not know,' with its idiotic 'do'? This 'do' is supposed to be for emphasis; but to say 'I know not' would attract attention from everybody, while 'I do not know' lacks all emphasis.

English cannot poke fun at absurdities of other languages.

Mr. Owen Brady celebrated his 100th birthday at Titree Springs, in the Carcoar district, New South Wales, a few days ago. He was born in Cork in 1807, and, though nearly blind now, all his other faculties are good and his memory wonderfully keen. He served with General de Lacy Evans in Spain.

The afflicted all fly to it,
The suffering cry for it,
Sing praises high of it,
It can ensure
Protection from chills,
Chest troubles and ills,
Keep down doctors' bills—
Woods' Great Peppermint Cure.

WANTED—Vice-Regal and other Testimonials applied to **Cantharides and Rosemary** have not made it famous, — it is the hair preparation itself. Try it and be convinced. 2/6; postage, 3d. extra. — **ILES & POOLE** Hairdressers — Princes Street, Dunedin, Sole Proprietors.