

Father, only the hand of Victor Hugo could have done him justice. He was also

One of the Original Founders.

He had been twenty-three years in the Mission, and was not young, nor yet slender. But he was gay with a French gaiety, a great reader, a student of native character and tradition. He is a real Father to these natives of Beipaa, that rather stormy town (they had a terrific fight while I was there, and a good number of casualties, though no one was killed. Father V—generally manages to compose these differences, before they proceed to actual bloodshed, as they used to do.)

I liked the Mission folk of Beipaa much the best. I also liked those of Waima, Inawi, Rara, Inawai, Yule Island, Mafulu, and Dilava much the best, too. This may read confusingly, but it is nevertheless true. Each Sister, when one fixed one's mind on her, was the best of the lot; each Father or Brother was nicer than all the rest—until one detached one's mind again and carried on the comparison. The fact is that they were all too good to be true—only they were true.

And some of them—many of them—were so pretty (the Sisters, I mean). One could not help liking this, because it showed plainly that the Mission was not fed with the left-overs and odd-come-shorts of the outer world. Nothing was too good for the work. I shall long remember the calm Madonna face, the still blue eyes with an altar-flame in each, of one young Sister from the far-away North; the dainty Dresden-china-ness of a little French Sister who made wonderful flowers and ornaments for the church, and (one felt) was neat and elegant and precise in her very prayers; the dark, handsome, gallant nun, who looked like her own hussar brother (I am sure she must have one, somewhere away in France), rode like Joan of Arc, and seemed somehow incomplete without a banner in her hand. And there were others—but the less said about this the better the dear Sisters would be pleased, for beauty is one of the things that they laid down on the altar when the great sacrifice of all was made, and they think of this and other vanities not at all.

(To be continued.)

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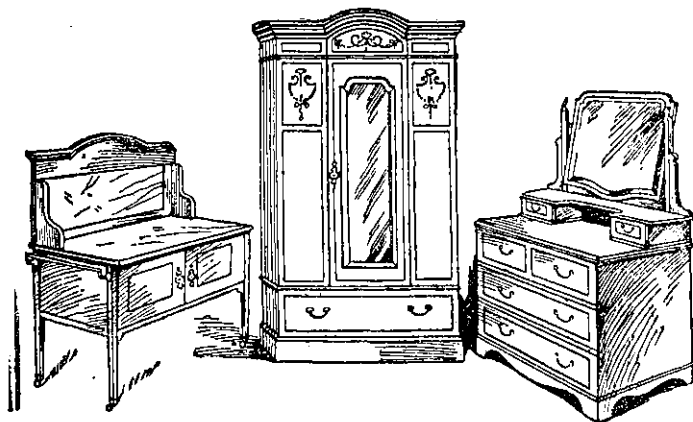
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