

CHILE AND ITS PEOPLE

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

The Republic of Chile (writes Mr. Charles Joseph Creamer in America) is divided into the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Santiago and its suffragans, the Dioceses of Concepcion, La Serena and Aneud. Besides these, there are in the north two Apostolic Vicariates, Iquique and Antofagasta. The bishops and clergy are generally men of the best families, descendants from the old Spanish stock, whose noble Christian sentiments, courteous manners, and generosity they have retained.

The population of Santiago, the capital, is about 400,000, that of the whole Republic is about 3,000,000. Years ago the Government deprived the clergy of the tithes, promised to rebuild and repair churches, and to support religion in general; but, alas! these promises are very inadequately fulfilled. The consequence is that there is a great scarcity of clergy in the rural districts. In the capital some 600 priests, regular and secular, reside. The religious orders of men and women are well represented, and do excellent work. In the city the majority of the secular clergy are sons of rich families, who live on their patrimonies, and are principally engaged in teaching and in the service of the local parishes. On Saturdays many of these go out to country chapels, which are distant from a parish church, to celebrate Mass, preach the Gospel, catechise and administer the Holy Sacraments. During the week the gentleman owner of the hacienda, or his lady or eldest son, conducts the devotions of the Rosary and Litany and the various Novenas in season, in the estate chapel, surrounded by their numerous family and the families of the inquilinos. It is a lovely sight to see all, rich and poor, noble Spaniard and lowly Indian, there gathered together in prayer. The country parish churches are frequently ten or twenty leagues apart. I think 50 dollars per month would be about the average revenue of a country parish. The priest must keep one or two horses. The country clergy are apostolic men in every sense of the word.

The seminary is at the capital, Santiago, where an efficient staff of professors instruct some 400 youths. The course of studies for the priesthood lasts twelve years; six are devoted to the Humanities, two to Mental Philosophy, and four to Theology. The diocese of Aneud, in the far south, extending to Patagonia and Terra del Fuego, also has a seminary under the charge of the Jesuits. The diocese of Concepcion and La Serena and the Port of Valparaiso have minor seminaries, in which only the Humanities and Mental Philosophy are taught. I have lived in Chile for ten years, and it gives me much pleasure indeed to testify to

The High Intellectuality and Morality

of the Chilean clergy and people. Indeed, I have been edified by what I have seen and heard there, and I really think we, in the United States and Canada, could learn some salutary lessons from our noble Chilean brethren. One thing which has attracted my attention and admiration very much are their Houses for Spiritual Exercises (*Casas de Ejercicios*). These are found not only in the cities, but even in the country. They are very large; some receive as many as 1000 retreatants at a time. The Spiritual Exercises last nine days, during which time food and lodging are provided gratis to all the poor in attendance.

One can imagine the amount of good forthcoming from these retreats preached by zealous and learned priests, seculars and regulars, at short intervals throughout the entire year. When the course for men ends, one for women begins. Besides these, there is a mission of nine days given in every parish church, and also in many private chapels every year, and novenas continually follow one another. Those old-styled Christians of Chile would think something was wrong and wanting if they were present at our missions and retreats in the United States. In their language they would call ours '*retiros aguados*' (watered retreats), for they would miss the hissing and cracking of the discipline in the church darkened by the extinction of all lights except the faint glimmer of the sanctuary lamp.

There is no divorce in Chile. Family life is really beautiful in its patriarchal simplicity. The young girl is presented to society only a few months before her marriage. Courtings are very short and under strict vigilance. Once married, the young wife devotes herself to her husband; her flowers and jewels are

The Sons and Daughters God Blesses Her With, and they grow up to love and respect and obey those fathers and mothers who have proved themselves so worthy of such affection. When speaking of their father the children say: '*Mi señor padre* (my lord father); '*Mi señora madre*' (my lady mother). Children consult their parents even in trivial matters. Never, in any other country, have I seen such mutual respect and love between husband and wife and children and parents.

The principal newspapers are the private enterprises of Catholic gentlemen; the *Union* of Santiago, Valparaiso, and Concepcion, *El Diario Ilustrado* and *El Popular* of San-

tiago, *El Pais* of Concepcion, as well as *La Revista Católica* do much to disseminate truth and correct error.

The haciendas are large, from 1000 to 10,000 acres, or more. The tillers of the soil are called peones or inquilinos. Their homes are built of adobe and divided into two or three apartments; the kitchen is outside of the house. Surrounding the house they have a half-acre of land for a kitchen garden; besides this they are allowed to work a few acres of land on equal shares with their patrons, who supply them with seed, oxen, and implements gratis. In return for the use of the house and land, the inquilino, or one member of his family, is required to work every work day for his food and a small wage, about fifteen cents per day. He is also allowed pasturage for a few head of cattle and sheep, and may keep fowls and pigs if he desire. His fuel is also free. The Conservative hacendados usually have a chapel on their haciendas; and the people have Mass on Sundays and holidays, at least. A physician visits some of the haciendas once or twice a week, so that on the estates of the Conservatives the peones are fairly well off and generally contented. It is a grand sight to see so many thousands of the descendants of the aboriginal Indians everywhere present in these Latin Republics. They are all baptised; all instructed in their religion; all receive the Holy Sacraments. Many have Spanish blood in their veins. What a sad contrast to what we see in these United States and in some Provinces of Canada!

It is true that there is much discontent among the laboring classes in the cities, where the poor people earn little, learn expensive habits, and are much addicted to gambling and intemperance in drink. But the bishops and clergy are laboring hard to improve the conditions of the poor. Those of the clergy who are well-to-do are very generous, as are also the rich laity. There are free hospitals everywhere. Houses are being built for the poor on easy terms of payment. The laborers are encouraged to enter the Guild of St. Joseph, presided over by a priest, who attends to them spiritually; instructing them to be patient with their lot, and warning them against the utopian illusions preached to them by the Radicals and their Protestant allies. The present Archbishop of Santiago, Dr. Don Juan Ignacio Conzaes, the Bishop of Concepcion, Dr. Don Louis Enrique Izuquero, and the Bishop of La Serena, Dr. Don Ramon Anjel Jara are spending

Their Lives and Their Means

in improving the condition of the working classes. The late lamented Archbishop Don Mariano Casanoya and the late Dr. Fontecilla of La Serena were also hard-working, self-denying, and generous. Parochial and State schools are to be found everywhere, and colleges and universities are open to all and within the means of many. Orphanages and homes for destitute children, training schools for artisans conducted by the Salesian Fathers, in fact, Christian charity is in evidence on all sides for the relief of sickness and want, and for the education of youth. In the face of such facts, I cannot comprehend how anyone can malign those noble and generous and hospitable South Americans. If all are like the Chileans, I must say I wish we were in some respects more like them ourselves.

One day about twelve years ago as we were approaching Port Limon in Costa Rica, the captain of the ship said to me: 'You know only the clergy of North America; but I assure you those of these countries are a very different class of men.' 'In what respect?' I asked. 'In their morality,' he replied. 'For instance,' he said, 'the bishop here has seven daughters, and on the last occasion that I was in port the people were celebrating the marriage of one of them.' I told this good, Bible-reading and prayerful captain that when I went ashore I would inquire into the matter. I found the bishop to be a learned and holy man, a Lazarist, born in Austria of a noble family. Before his consecration he had been a professor of philosophy and theology, and since then had spent his fortune in building churches and other good works, and his energies in elevating the moral tone and intelligence of his flock.

The truth is that many northerners who visit these southern republics are prejudiced against their inhabitants. They get so-called information from people who are always ready to speak ill of the upper classes, and of a religion of which they know little or nothing or from those whose associates are Radicals and Freemasons.

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