

# The Catholic Journal.

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## CHARMING AND DEVOUT.

### Story of the Death of a Pagan Convert to the True Faith.

How a Prince of Madagascar, Brought to the Light in His Old Age, Set an Example Worthy of Imitation—Progress of Religion in the Great Island.

There is a highly interesting account in the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith of the progress of religion in Madagascar. Among other passages not the least interesting is one in connection with the death of one of the princes of that country, which is told with a native simplicity that makes it quite charming and devout. It runs as follows:

"One of our best Christians, John Baptist Rasovelo, Lord of Ambohimasina, of the noble castle of Zazamarolahy (highest castle of the Malagasy nobility), died on Aug. 15, thus going to celebrate in heaven the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady. What a beautiful soul was his! It was not until he was past 70 that he got to know the true religion; but his honesty, truly extraordinary for a Malagasy Pagan, had opened the way for him. From that time until his death, his venerable head, with its white hair and beard, was to be seen in the midst of the black woolly heads of his lower Betsileo vassals as they were learning the Catechism. When he had found the light, he was ever striving to make it visible to the eyes of his family and his people. The Church of Ambohimasina, situated near his residence, was at two hours' distance from Menakely (the) of Ambohipivato. To spare his young pupils fatigue, he constituted himself gratuitously their schoolmaster. The children used to arrive on Saturday evening, and did not take their departure till Wednesday. The noble Lord lodged them, had their meals prepared, and conducted them in order to Mass or to their games.

"His last illness was the occasion of much edification. Once, twice, or even three times a week, we used to go in solemn procession, headed by the cross, singing hymns, to bear to him the bread of the strong. Seated on his bed, clad in his most beautiful white robes, he received his Divine Guest with a faith that astonished the numerous Pagans that witnessed the touching scene. He never failed to make his preparation aloud, in the form of an appeal to the Divine King, and his thanksgiving in the terms employed by the Malagasy when they offer the Sovereign the Hasin' Andriana, or homage of fidelity and vassalage. The devil, being filled with jealousy, ceased not to harass him during his last illness; but while he retained his senses, John Baptist Rasovelo continued to fight and repel the repeated attacks of the enemy. In his simple faith, he desired to have a stick always near his pillow, and would seize it at each fresh apparition of the tempter and deal blows right and left until he put his enemy to flight. I had no difficulty in persuading him that there existed a more efficacious weapon; I quietly removed the stick and put a vessel of holy water in its place, and then I gave him a crucifix. From that moment victory was assured, but at the price of I know not how many signs of the cross, sprinklings of holy water, and ardent kisses imprinted on the figure of Jesus Crucified.

#### A Gentleman and a Christian.

"On Saturday, Aug. 13, I was summoned in all haste to administer extreme unction and say the prayers for those in agony. It was just before the Assumption, which was also the feast of the dedication of one of my churches. On that day also there were to be some First Communions. I must own that we were not grateful to the good and noble Lord, Rasovelo, for thus saddening the days of joy by his death. But he, a thorough gentleman as well as a thorough Christian, seemed, according to his wont, to guess our desires, and fulfilled them. In a way which struck all, even the Pagans, as extraordinary, his agony was prolonged for three days; and when our feasts were coming to an end, and when the last joyous chants were dying out, in the evening of the triumphant Assumption of Our Lady, the beautiful soul of John Baptist Rasovelo went, as we hope, to the eternal fatherland to take part in the rejoicings of Mary.

"Amongst the Christians, amongst his vassals, and throughout the country, there was a general mourning. When I arrived on the evening preceding the funeral, a dense crowd was waiting to pass the night beside the bed of death, according to the Malagasy custom—a sad enough usage, alas! To protest against their shameful practices, and to set in opposition to them the majesty of the Christian ceremonies, we resolved to keep the holy watch by the body. The removal of the corpse at nightfall attracted the crowd into the vast church of Ambohimasina. Upon a catafalque as grand as our poverty allowed, we placed the venerated remains, by the glare of the torches. The ceremony was certainly striking. The Pagans themselves were moved, and they followed with attention our exercises, prayers, chants, pious readings, the Way of the Cross, and the Rosaries, which continued all night long around the coffin of this noble and valiant Christian, who while living had presided so many times at our pious meetings in that very same place. In the morning, at six, the Communion

Mass was celebrated in the presence of all these Christians gathered together from different districts. Then Father Montant sang the Mass of Requiem, and accompanied the corpse to its last earthly abode."

#### Some Strange African Religions and the Christian Opposition.

Here are a few lines on the chief obstacles which the Propagation of the Faith has to encounter in Madagascar:

"The devil, infuriated against the human race, attacks each individual and each nation in its weak point," writes again Father Fontaine to Mgr. Casati. "A thing that is astonishing and perhaps unique in the world—Satan has laid siege to Madagascar and got possession of it by means of death. Everywhere else, if I am not mistaken, when the enemy has become master of a place and has closed all means of exit, when all the means of safety have been stopped, death still remains as a last hope. How many notorious reprobates have been converted at the last hour! But it is, on the contrary, through death itself that the Malagasy are lost. The serious illnesses preceding the last moments of life, as a fact, these poor people at the mercy of sorcerers, the only doctors—I was almost going to say the only priests—formerly known in Madagascar. Through them the devil gets possession of the dying and of their families, while making them submit to the most detestable practices. One of these that of the stamanga, consists in wild dances, cold baths, and innumerable ignominies in the presence of an immense crowd and to the sound of savage music. Then, to remove all idea of a Divine Judge, the devil gains the attention of the dying man by the apparition of ancestors and other dismal spectres, well fitted to revive in

edy is handy—the demijohn of rum. Whenever a corpse is at length buried, howsoever thinly the country may be peopled, another is sure to follow; and the feast is again and again renewed. There are scoundrels of both sexes who have no other occupation than to hurry from one dead person to another.

"For twenty years the missionaries, especially amongst the Betsileos, have been doing their utmost against the deplorable customs, but they are still far from having gained their point.

"We are gaining ground, however, and latterly especially we have been able to count some signal victories over the devil and his dead. A missionary does not fear to pounce suddenly in the night upon a drunken, savage crowd, that, gathered around a corpse, is given over to the saturnalia of which I have just spoken, and to put the people to rout with redoubled blows. Moreover, the schoolmasters gather together their pupils and the most sincere Christians, and, forming an armed procession, they march thus to gain possession of the corpse. The agents of Satan in dismay take to flight; the demijohns of rum are remorselessly smashed, and all through the night prayers and hymns are heard, instead of ribald, bacchic

#### A Bishop's Bed.

The Bishop of Qu'Appelle, who left England for his diocese on June 27, says, in a letter to a private friend: "I left Toronto on Friday night, hoping to reach Winnipeg early on Monday morning. However, on Sunday, at 4 o'clock, the train stopped at a small place (White River), and we were told we could not go on as the river had flowed over the line. There we waited 30 hours, at a place of ten wood huts; but there was a mission church there

## AMONG THE INDIANS.

Interesting Interview With Archbishop Ryan of Philadelphia.

Interference of Government Officials in the Religious Matters of the Nation's Wards Contrary to the American Idea of Freedom of Conscience.

An interesting interview with Archbishop Ryan of Philadelphia, on the Indian policy of the present administration was recently published. A portion of the interview is as follows:

"What do you think of Commissioner Browning's replacing civilians by army officers in the Indian agencies?" the Archbishop was asked.

"I think it was a wise measure," Dr. Ryan replied. "It is well known to many that the Indians have always done better under military men than under civilians. They know the Indian character, they are candid and disinterested in their dealings with these helpless people and they are not subject to the shifting which follows a change of administration. The Indians know and appreciate the soldier character. Not many years ago they tried to induce the government to appoint military men as agents.

"I recall when General Harney was living and Father De Smet was the great missionary of the Indians, how some trouble arose among the red men, and the President said: 'General, you will have to lead an army against these fellows.' General Harney replied: 'No; send Father De Smet and myself to treat with them and you will have no need of an army.' The President did so and so much were these two men trusted and respected by the Indians that the trouble was arranged without bloodshed. The army officers are ren-

dering the Indian fairly and to aid the missionaries in continuing and completing the work which they alone began. There has been something so unsettled in the treatment of the Indians for the past ten years that it would be well if President Cleveland's temperate and steady policy could be continued independent of change of administration. The appointing of army officers to the agencies will help towards that end."

"Perhaps the Government officials have an impossible job ahead of them to manage in perfect peace these savages?"

"Savages?" said the Archbishop. "Let me tell you what Father De Smet said when his Indians were called savages in his presence. 'The only real savages I ever met,' said this experienced old man, 'were in such cities as New York and St. Louis; men who have renounced Christianity often are far more savage than the Indians.' And he went on to praise the wonderful natural virtues of the tribes he worked among; the Pagan tribes, mind you, who had not yet received the Gospel, but who had not suffered from the example of the savage bordermen. The modesty of the women and the morality of the men charmed this man who had seen these virtues among Christian people."

"It is a curious fact that life among the Indians has a fascination for the missionaries, so that the most learned priests—men who would have shone in the professor's chair or risen to the highest places—once having tasted of this peculiar life in the woods and mountains, care no more to return to civilization. The simple virtues of the Indians charm them. Father De Smet used to tell a story which is to the point. He was unable to speak the Indian dialects, and in his preaching employed an interpreter. On one

we have missions for the Indians in at least twelve States and Territories, and they look after the education and training of 50,000 Catholic Indians. The missionaries number 113 priests, chosen from the various religious orders, Jesuits, Benedictines and Franciscans. They are assisted in the work by the various sisterhoods.

"Our schools number 82, and our churches perhaps 150. We educate, feed and clothe, with the government's help, over 5,000 children. Last year we received into the Church over 2,000 Indians by baptism. That means long and careful instruction of these poor people, whose ignorance can be imagined when they first come to the mission."

"We have a normal school for the Indians in Indiana, with 81 pupils, four of them in training for the priesthood. We also have industrial schools, where the children are trained to farm work and various trades. With the sums allowed by the government, the sums collected yearly in our churches, and the donations received from other quarters, we would not be able to meet the expenses of the mission but for the regular and generous assistance of the Drexel family, whose members have been specially devoted to these missions."

"The field of missionary work has been cultivated by us for nearly a century in this country, not to mention the labors of French missionaries in colonial times. We do not look with indifference, therefore, on the attempts of transient officials to drive us from ground we have so properly and beneficially made our own. Neither is it according to the American idea of freedom of conscience that Catholic Indians, because in theory they are held to be government wards, should be compelled to adopt any creed that pleases the passing Indian Commissioner."

"In Oregon, for example, the priest is not permitted to attend the Catholic Indians on certain reservations. In General Morgan's time most of the Protestant missions agreed to refuse government aid for the sole purpose of forcing us to do the same. But in spite of these annoyances I hope to see the good work go on in peace. The government ought surely to appreciate the work of our heroic missionaries and philanthropists, a work without any recompense in this world."

"Do you take any interest in the summer school which opens this year in Plattsburgh?"

"It would be impossible not to feel a very deep interest in an enterprise so important, and one that has made so fair a beginning. It has my warmest sympathy."

"It is too soon, of course, to speak of the future of the school, but if it be the intention to start similar schools in the course of time in other sections of the country, it seems to me advisable that the Chautauqua plan be continued in this case. The offspring of the parent should remain attached to the mother and maintain an affectionate intimacy. Chautauqua's branches are, I understand, managed from the central school."

"The favor which the regents of the New York State University have shown the school has won for these liberal-minded gentlemen the regard of the Catholic body, and in making the Bishop of Albany a member of the Board they have conferred an honor upon the Episcopate which I cannot mention without sincere praise."

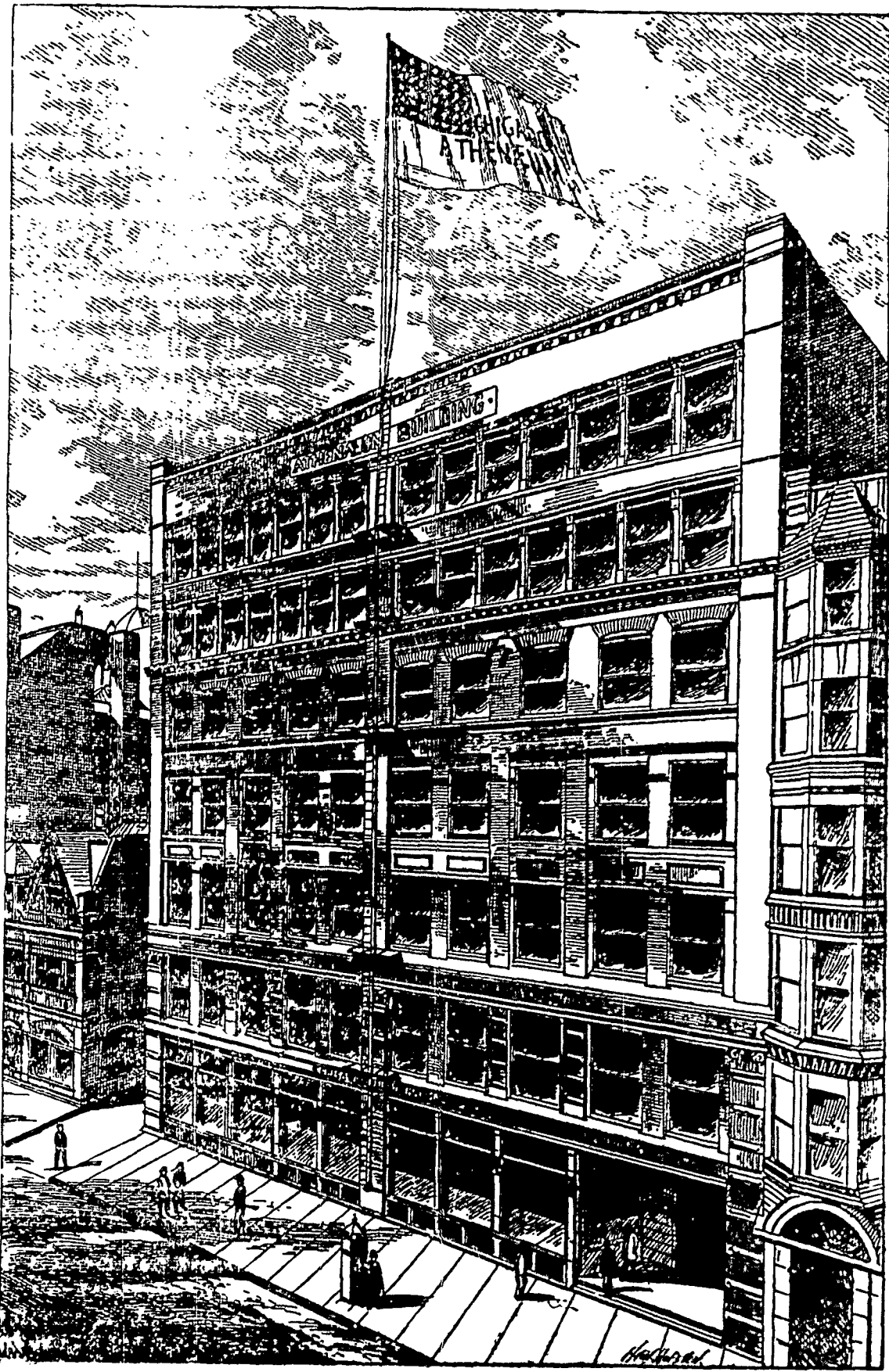
#### "Reduction of Clerical Salaries."

A telegram announced the other day the interesting fact that the Holy See had communicated with the Spanish Government to the effect that the Pope consents to an enforced reduction of clerical salaries. Now this telegram, it should be observed, only expresses half the truth of that which has actually occurred. In order to understand the facts of the case it will be necessary to remember that in the severe monetary crisis through which Spain is passing, the Queen Regent and the Royal Family offered a shining example of sacrifice by renouncing many of the emoluments derived from the Civil list. That example has been followed by the Ministers, and naturally justifies the sacrifice which will be eventually imposed upon all the State servants. The clergy, also, by no means backward in patriotism, have some forward to take part in the general offering; a course of action, however, which, under the circumstances, can only be sanctioned by the Holy See. The Pope's consent has accordingly been granted, but under three conditions: 1. The reduction of the clerical salaries shall have a provisional character; 2. It shall be applied only to such ecclesiastics and religious institutions as enjoy sufficient revenue; 3. The clergy shall only be compelled to such reduction when it has already been applied to other State servants. Le Moniteur de Rome, the paper which supplies this information, also adds, with evident reference to some other published report, that it is untrue that the Holy See gave this consent by a telegraphic despatch, a course which is not customary; but it is possible that the Ambassador attached to the Holy See communicated to his government by telegraph the intelligence which he received with the usual formalities.

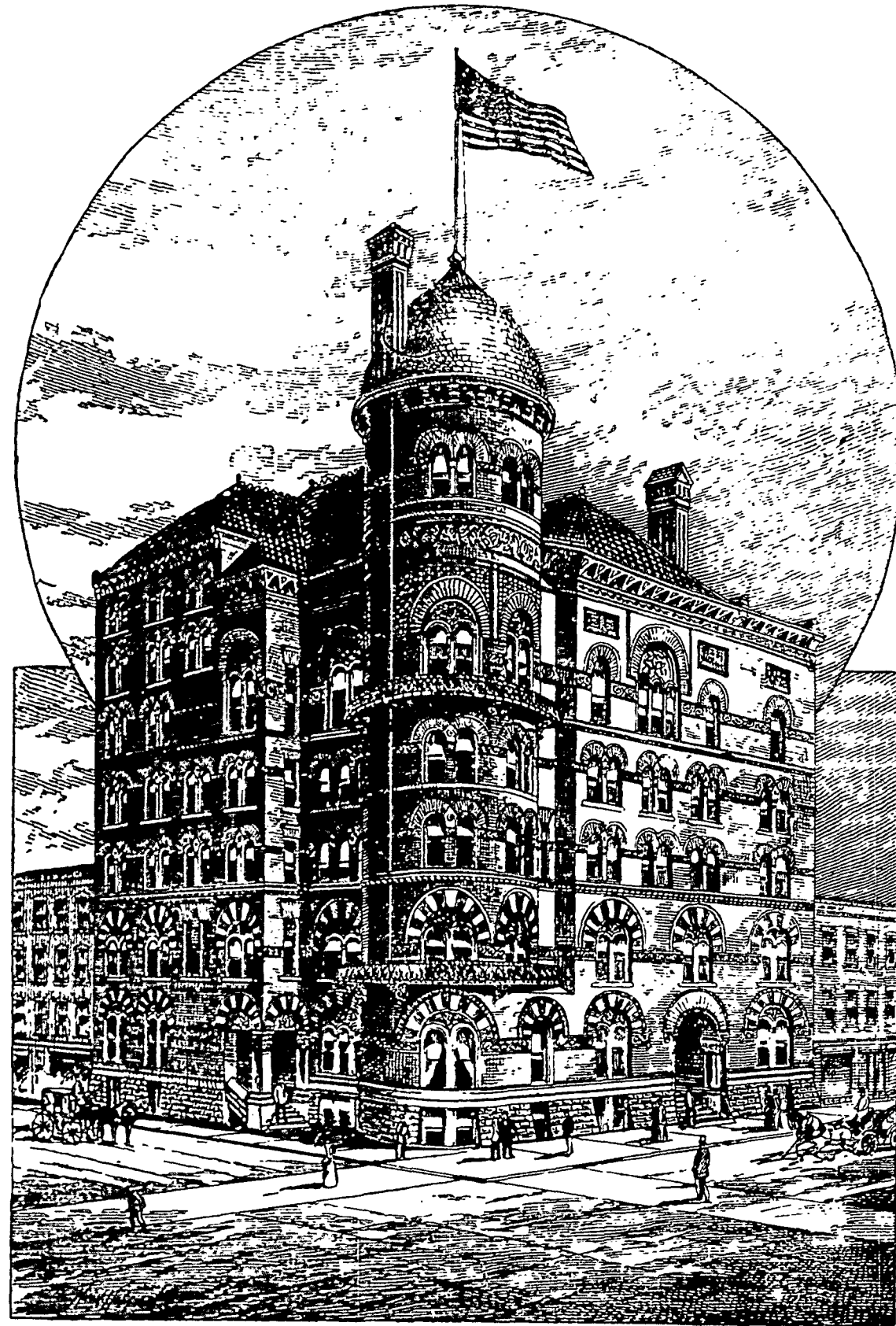
The man wastes his time who undertakes to reason with a fool.

When our hearts are full of Christ a very little of this world is enough.

Natures can ever become so large as not to depend for life upon its smallest roots. Profession that is all pretense has no influence except for evil.



ATHENAEUM BUILDING.



UNION LEAGUE CLUB. CHICAGO, ILL.

the minds of those present the worship of ancestors, which replaces that of God.

"But a worship still more diabolical is that of corpses.

"A man dies; immediately no expense is spared; when living there was nothing but a filthy rag to cover his nakedness; when dead his remains are draped in an immense lambs of silk, ornamented with precious stones; living, a wretched mud and wattle hut sufficed to shelter him and a little rice or manioc to feed him; dead, on his stone tomb, costing hundreds of pieces of money, he is surrounded by hundreds of oxen. Mourning is transformed into a festival—into infernal orgies. The notions of mourning, misfortune, happiness, are translated into Malagasy by one and the same word, Zo. 'Such a one is dead; oh, what good luck, what a feast!' All the souls of the land say it, and agree to meet at the house of the dead. Quickly musicians are sent for, bull-fights are arranged; beef is distributed by the quarter; rum flows in streams. The Betsileo drinks, at the expense of the dead, to utter drunkenness. Then the noisy play begins and cries of savage joy enough to make you ill. Then, when the sun has sunk below the horizon, the night that follows gives free course to unbounded licentiousness without name, when all the laws of decency suffer hideous outrage. All this lasts not one or two or three days, but ten, and at times a whole month. The infection exhalant from the corpse invades the house, the village, the whole neighborhood; but the rem-

so I took the service. On Tuesday morning we went on over miles of exciting and somewhat dangerous places, the water being two feet eight inches deep in places, nearly putting the engine fire out." The Bishop adds that the "Palace" is very lively, being largely patronized by mice. The furniture consists at present of a straw mattress, two chairs and a table—the last item borrowed.

#### "The Cross of Christ."

A correspondent of the London Tablet writes: I cannot admit that the illustration from Lipsius, representing a man nailed to an upright stake, shows a mode of crucifixion common in the time of our Lord. To do so would be to go against Lipsius himself, and would, moreover, involve the rejection of all the critical authority and historical evidence that we possess on this subject. Great stress has been laid on the distinction between the Greek and Latin forms of the Cross. It would certainly be very misleading to take these terms in any exclusive sense. The Greek Church uses, and has always used, the Latin cross, just as the Roman Church has made use of the Greek cross from the earliest times. Perhaps the distinction between the Roman and Byzantine use in the employment of these two forms is most pronounced in the ground-plan upon which churches are commonly constructed in the East and West respectively. But even here, as early as the age of Constantine, we find churches in the East built in the form of a Latin cross.

and they have respect for the treaty obligations of the government. Failure to observe these treaties has been the shame of our government's Indian policies."

"Under General Morgan your missions suffered, did they not?"

"General Morgan was afflicted with the idea of making the Indian non-sectarian, and he certainly disturbed our missions. He wished to apply to the Indians the public system idea. He forgot one important fact. Children who attend non-sectarian schools can be taught their religion at home, for they have Christian homes; but the Indian youth with Pagan parents, or ignorant or incapable ones, get no religious training at all if he does not receive it at the Government school. President Harrison's Commissioner would have deprived the Indians of one certain benefit the Christian school can give them. He seemed determined to wrest the Indians by degrees from the guardianship of those who had labored for their elevation years before the State found time to look after them. We have no pleasant memories of Gen. Morgan's term in office."

"Do the missions hope to fare better under President Cleveland's administration?"

"We were well content with the treatment of the missions during his first administration. If the same spirit should dictate his present policy we cannot complain. Commissioner Browning and Superintendent Armstrong are said to be men of superior intelligence and free from theories. They wish simply to treat

occasion he was thus preaching to a gathering of Indians who sat on the side of a hill listening to him, the chiefs and notables on the top of the ridge, the common crowd below. They listened gravely to his instruction and his interpreter. When it was ended one of the chiefs came down to tell him in very good English that he had a poor interpreter.

"These people," said the chief, "think deeply on what you have been saying, but the interpreter has put it before them in a foolish way."

"But pray," said the astonished missionary, "where did you learn English?"

"In Ireland, faith," replied the Indian chief. Then he told his story to the amused and delighted priest. He had wandered West from New York, had taken to drink in the border towns when a friend transacting business with the Indians took him along to get him away from whisky. He had taken a fancy to the Indians and remained with them. Then in a war with other tribes he had distinguished himself and was made a chief. "After that," said he, "I married a squaw as well as I could, where there was no priest, and I have five paposes that I baptized as well as I knew how, but I'd like to have your Reverence do it all over and do it right this time."

If men like these missionaries loved and admired the Indian character there must have been much good in them, and government treatment of them calls for a re-estimation."

"What work are your missionaries doing among the Indians?"