

Picturesque Revival of the Mission Play

Impressive Pageant Unfolding, with the Reverence of a Passion Play, the Romantic Religious Beginnings of California and the Great Southwest.



Impersonating Capitanejo Chief of the Indians of Carmelo and Monterey

BY SARA BLACK.

AS TO a shrine a vast procession is trooping from all parts of the United States and Canada to witness the revival of the Mission Play at San Gabriel, Cal. Three-quarters of a million folk have already enjoyed the great pageant play, which might without impiety be called the Passion Play of California. The latter deals with the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made to establish Christianity; the Mission Play tells the story of the sacrifice of the Mission Fathers who braved and met death to carry the torch of civilization and the lamp of learning into fields where lynch law, the shot from ambush and "better man" once controlled.

Fray Junipero Serra, actual founder of the missions, lives again in the play amid cactus-studded deserts, the sand and sagebrush, the broiling sun and untrodden snow he endured. The story of this modern Paul, his abnegation, his perseverance, his indefatigable spirit, conquering apparently insuperable odds, is a gripping, thrilling, realistic production. Those of all creeds enjoy it because, after all, about the doings of that monumental character of two centuries ago, was weaved the fabric of the early history of the great state of California.

Frank Miller, master of the Mission Inn at Riverside, Cal., conceived the idea of the play which was put into words by John S. McGroarty. It cost \$500,000 to produce. Able Theatians appear in the leading roles. Frederick Warde interprets the character of the founder of the missions. Mrs. Tyrone Power is the leading lady. Minor parts are taken by descendants of Spanish and Mexican settlers and by the aboriginal Indians. Their acting is intensified by their religious zeal.

The playhouse at San Gabriel is just opposite the historical bell tower. Its distinctive feature is its foyer—a miniature Camino Real. Passing to the right as one enters under the arched gateway a complete pilgrimage of the 21 missions may be made. This replica of the King's highway is fascinating and leads one around the entire building. The outer wall is painted to represent the colorful California landscape and forms the background for the models of the different missions established along the King's highway from San Diego to San Francisco.

The Story of the Missions.

The lacy branches of the pepper tree, tropical vines and shrubs are growing everywhere. Indian men are walking about. Indian women are busily weaving baskets, bead chains and artistic rugs. The soft, sweet notes of a guitar come from a distance and the whole environment makes it easily possible to imagine one's self back in the days of the brown-robed padres and the glorious wealth and plenty of the garden era of the sunshine state.

The three great epochs of the play are symbolized by a prologue in pantomime:

- I. The Indian sensing the approach of the white man.
- II. The spectre of the fading military glory of the Spanish conquest.
- III. The spirit of the ever-living faith in the omnipotent.

The first is illustrated by a savage, clad in skins, gazing out into space, visioning the inevitable approach of civilization in the form of the white man, which means his extinguishment as a race.

Vanishing like a dream when dawn approaches, the soldier of the Spanish conquest, his glory departed, his pride and strength faded, takes the savage's place. But he, too, is disappearing and, like the day breaking in full splendor, the third epoch is illustrated by the Franciscan monk in brown robe, hands uplifted, as he points to the spiritual life, the dawning of a day that cannot fade or pass away.

The three acts of the Mission play tell the story of the arrival at San Diego of the Spanish from Mexico in 1769, and the Franciscan monks who came with them; the founding and

growth of the missions under the supervision of these monks as led by the father, president, Fray Junipero Serra, and the fall of the missions.

The first act opens on the shores of the beautiful bay of San Diego. Several soldiers and a padre are discussing the return of Don Gaspar de Portoria, the military commander of the expedition sent from Mexico. Don Gaspar, with a company of soldiers, has gone up the coast in search of the port of Monterey. Those remaining behind, after six months waiting, are discouraged and mutiny is in the air. Junipero Serra alone holds fast to the belief that they will return and that their efforts will be crowned with success. His heart yearns over this beautiful land and its people.

Junipero calls to him Vincenzo—the one Indian christianized—loads him with bright-colored cloth and beads to give to his tribe and sends him forth to find a child for baptism. While the Indian is gone Don Gaspar and his men return. Monterey has not been found. But a harbor "beautiful beyond description" has been discovered farther to the north.

Feeling that little or nothing has been accomplished and his men are starving, the military leader orders all to be ready to return to Mexico and the ship to sail at the setting of the sun. California shall be abandoned.

All are glad but Junipero Serra. He will not depart, he tells the commander. He declares that he will remain, alone if necessary, to prosecute the work for which he came. The play between the great sublime faith and unflinching courage of the missionary and the despair and discouragement of the soldiers is unsurpassed art. Junipero pleads with the gobernador to wait just a few days more, that the relief ship promised a year ago will surely arrive. The soldiers laugh the idea to scorn and the gobernador orders again that preparations be made for embarking. But when Junipero makes a frenzied

appeal to heaven the soldiers respectfully kneel.

The priest, exhausted from his struggle, faints at the end of his agonized prayer. Then a soldier shouts "A sail! A sail! God has answered your prayer! Look, Father, look!" A Spanish galleon is seen rounding Port Loma into the bay of San Diego as the priest revives.

The second act depicts the missions in their glory; when California was a land of plenty; when the Indians had risen to the stature of white men and peace and gladness and plenty held all in glad embrace.

A period of 15 years has elapsed. Through the almost superhuman efforts of Junipero Serra, nine missions have been established, each one reaching out a hand of service, of education and love and friendship. The curtain rises on a beautiful scene, revealing Junipero's own mission, San Carlos, at Carmel (near Monterey).

At the right is a spacious court or patio, vine-covered. In the center stands a tall, ivy-covered cross, and a beautiful pepper tree spreads its graceful branches protectively over all. Through the arches that inclose the patio, the shining, shimmering sea laps the shore, the peaceful, beautiful Bay of Carmel.

Day is just breaking and a procession of Indians, Mexicans, villagers and priests of the mission file into the chapel for early worship. Two pretty Spanish girls, as gayly dressed as any two song birds could possibly be, arrive at the door just too late to enter. They sing the service outside. So pure and clear are the voices of the singers that one finds himself bowing his head in reverence.

In truth these singers are all well-known vocalists, chosen for their beautiful voices and Spanish accents. They sing the "Santo," an old hymn used in the days of the missions, and which had not been heard in San Gabriel for 50 years. Then the priests from the nine missions recite reports to the father

president, Fray Junipero Serra, of the work done at each individual mission during the year just ended, and of the Indian converts. They tell of thousands of bushels of grain, great herds of sheep and cattle. But the number of Indians christianized is what Junipero Serra seems to love best to hear. "Ah, that is the news we want to hear!" exclaims Junipero Serra.

The love that the missionaries had for the Indians and their protection of them is graphically pictured where Junipero Serra refuses to allow the commandante of the king's soldiers in California to carry off a beautiful Indian girl. In a magnificent scene of wrath and powerful mastery he rescues her and threatens to call down the curse of the church upon the head of the sacrilegious wretch.

The End of Junipero.

The fiesta scene, the winding up of the special gathering, is one gloriously intoxicating, brilliant picture of Spanish holiday making. The gaily colored gowns of the Spanish women, the picturesque caballeros, the Indian chiefs in war regalia, the bronze skin of the Indian dancers—all add to the dazzling color and brilliant scene. Nowhere outside of a Latin country could such action in song and dance, such fascination of motion and music of love and life, of mirth and joy, be seen. The war dances led by the Indian chief, Young Eagle, bedecked with his war bonnet of eagle feathers and porcupine quills trailing the ground, is exciting and wonderful to behold, accompanied as it is by the weird beating harmony of the Indian war drum music. Most excellent is the Spanish Senora dance, "El Sombrero Blanco," the dance of the "White Hat," said to have been composed by Junipero Serra himself, and handed down from generation to generation.

The third act tells the end but exquisitely beautiful story of the missions in ruins. The brave, glad days are gone. The work of the mission-

aries is undone, and the Indian converts are being driven from place to place—starving, dying. San Juan Capistrano is in ruins. A Spanish senora (Mrs. Tyrone Power) comes

to the mission ruin to place flowers on the altar. She tries to speak of the old days, now gone by, to the Indian caretaker when two Indians are seen coming across the mustard

HAITIANS HARBOR VOODOOISM IN ITS MOST VIOLENT FORM

Origin of Strange Cult Probably Is in Serpent Worship and Horrors Lure Natives to Weird Superstitions.

AS NO accurate history of Haiti can be written without a reference to voodooism, the story of this strange cult, which some authorities say still is in practice in its most violent form among the people of this island and others of the West Indies, may be interesting in connection with the recent investigation of American occupation in Haiti," says a bulletin from the Washington, D. C., headquarters of the National Geographic society.

Voodooism could scarcely be called a religion, but so strong is its influence upon the superstitions of the negroes, that despite efforts to eradicate it, every year or two dispatches report that there has been a sudden outbreak of cannibalistic practices in connection with a revival of devotional enthusiasm.

Origins in Serpent Worship. "It is said that no white man would be allowed to live long after he had given testimony leading to the conviction of a culprit charged with sacrificing a child to his god. As a consequence, authentic information is difficult to get, and proof of a human sacrifice almost impossible. Many teachers and inhabitants of the islands deny the existence of the cult, though many stories of the horrors perpetrated at a meeting of the voodooes are recorded by naval officers who have visited the islands and by other men of integrity. "The general belief is that voodooism was brought to the Western

hemisphere from West Africa by the negroes imported as laborers, especially to Haiti, and it may probably be traced back to the serpent worship of Egypt. Many of the characteristics of the worship also were attributed to the French witches of the 15th century, the most violent phases of the practice, perhaps, being an outgrowth of the African superstitions of the black and of the French imagination of the white inhabitants of Haiti.

Voodoo Is American Corruption. "The god Obeah or Vaudoux, of which voodoo is an American corruption, is supposed to know, to see and to do all things, but he manifests himself to his worshippers only in the form of a nonpoisonous snake and communicates with them only through a priest and priestesses, known as papa-loi and maman-loi, who are held in great veneration by their followers.

"The ceremony is always held at night, usually in the fastnesses of some deep wood, where there will be no interruption of the rites. The devotees take off their shoes and bind about their bodies handkerchiefs, the predominant note of which is red, and the priest and priestesses wear red bands about their heads in the form of crowns. Then they pray to the snake, which is exhibited for the purpose of arousing their emotions. Maman-loi mounts the box in which the god is usually kept and emits groans, shrieks and wild postulations as she utters her prophetic sentences. "A dance closes the ceremony. The

king puts his hand on the box and a shudder somewhat similar to the effect produced by the most recent kind of 'jazz' seizes him and from him it passes to all the rest. Then the devotional exercises evolve into a delicious madness of wild debauchery and indecency under the cover of drunkenness and night. "The initiation of a convert to the faith is enough to inspire him with terror. He pledges himself, when his lips are touched with warm goat's blood, never under any circumstances to reveal the secrets of the fraternity and to kill any member who proves a traitor to the brotherhood. This is the point at which the cannibalism is supposed to occur, but investigation has shown that many of the shocking phases of the worship have been eliminated and the worshippers usually satisfy themselves with a cock or a goat, which is afterward cooked and eaten. "The voodoo women are thought to possess supernatural power and by working on the superstitions of the natives attain a potent influence over them. Many strong men have pined away merely because they thought an enemy had 'put Obeah' on them, just as the southern negro believed in the 'conjure' doctor who cast a 'spell' on him by leaving in his path a bottle containing horse hairs, snake's teeth, lizard claws, a piece of dried rat, and a frog's foot. Objects which have been used in the practice of the black art may be seen in the museum of the Petit Seminaire at Port au Prince. "So deeply have the people of Haiti become imbued with the cult that an empty bottle, which probably would entice a reminiscent grin from an American assembly, will throw a Haitian group into consternation, and educated Haitian girls have been known to faint at the sight of the uncanny shivers of spilled mercury.



Acting The Discovery of San Francisco By Don Gaspar De Portola



Priest And Redmen In The Drama of Primitive Days.



Fray Junipero Serra As Impersonated By Frederick Warde

fields bearing on a litter the body of Junipero, which they ask permission to bury in the holy grounds of Capistrano.

"St. senora, starved! starved!" the Indian replies to the senora's question. "He was our father, we his children. We will think of him always when we speak his name at sunrise, when we say 'Good morning, God,' and at evening when we lie down to sleep under the stars and say, 'Good-night, God!'"

Then follows Senora Yorba's heart-breaking soliloquy: "Farewell, dear place, Farewell, San Juan, that lingers in ruin by the sunset sea. Sleep well, ye that shall here abide until God's judgment day. Farewell, my countrymen, brown priests and all, Farewell, San Juan, farewell, farewell. Farewell, San Juan, I shall never look upon your broken walls again. Farewell, farewell."

The cross that stands upon the hillside above Capistrano is illumined; the sun sinks behind the horizon; the Mission Play ends.