LIFE AND LETTERS
OF
FATHER DAMIEN,
The Apostle of the Lepers.

EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION, BY HIS BROTHER,
FATHER PAMPHILE.

LONDON:
THE CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY,
21, WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD, S.E.
1889.
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PREFACE.

The issue of the following volume would have been impossible without the kind assistance and encouragement of Father Damien's brother, Father Pamphile. It is he who has furnished us with the interesting letters it contains. It is he who has supplied the notes which form the substance of it. It is he who has written the Introduction, which is literally translated in the following pages.

We scarcely think that the attention of the English-speaking public has been sufficiently called to the needs of the Fathers who have undertaken the heroic work of supplying Missionaries to the lepers. Every priest who lives among the lepers is likely, sooner or later, to be attacked by the disease, and we must expect that one martyr will follow another in this glorious task of Christian charity. What is therefore most needed is fresh labourers ready
to devote themselves to the work, and next to this, a supply of money to found a College such as that to which Father Pamphile refers in his Introduction. We hope that the generous subscribers and organizers of the Damien Memorial Fund will remember that no memorial will be so grateful to the heart of the Apostle as one that provides means for carrying on and extending the work for which he lived and died.
INTRODUCTION.

In publishing this new Life of Father Damien, we have in view a threefold object, viz., that of being of service to the Apostle himself, to the lepers for whose relief he had devoted his life, and also to further the Apostolic work begun by him in those places where he has exercised his zeal.

Of Father Damien much of late has been spoken, and much written. His name is in the mouths of all; his devotedness has been everywhere made known, and his labours have excited universal admiration. But yet, notwithstanding so widespread a reputation, he is not sufficiently known; and the principle underlying and actuat-

1 We have retained this spelling, because it has become familiar. The English form of the name would be Damian. The Father alludes in one of his later letters, printed in these pages, to his patron St. Damian being a physician. This shows that the Saint, from whom he took this name when he entered Religion, is the second of the two brothers, Cosmas and Damian, whose feast is September 27. They were both physicians.
ing his life of incomparable devotedness is not fully understood.

He was a man, earnest, compassionate, and active, of a cheerful frame of mind, and of great strength of character. Thus God, who disposes all things wisely, and had destined him to become the Apostle of the lepers, had endowed him with those qualities, both physical and natural, which are so needful for the laborious ministry that he was one day to exercise. Above all, he possessed and practised the virtues of the Saints, and to the strength of his character he joined the love of suffering and of the Cross. This it was that rendered him capable of the greatest sacrifices, sacrifices before which even the most intrepid of explorers would shrink, and which man abandoned to his own strength feels himself utterly unable to face.

The first object, then, that we have in view in presenting to the public this Life of Father Damien is to make him better known, and to show that he was above all a holy priest, possessing in an eminent degree all those virtues which make the true Apostle of the Gospel. In thus returning to the true source and principle of his devotedness, we wish to make his virtue all the more resplendent. Thus, too, we hope likewise
to be of service to our Holy Mother the Church, to whom alone belongs the power to form men capable of a like spirit of devotedness. Happy should we be if by this work it were given us to convince of the truth of our holy religion those upright and sincere souls who do not allow themselves to be led astray willingly by their prejudices.

The second object which we put before ourselves in the publication of this Life of Father Damien, is to arouse, to a still greater degree, sympathy for the poor lepers whose miserable condition made so lively an impression on the heart of their great Apostle, and for whose relief he made the sacrifice of his life. Thus we seek to interest public charity still more and more in the unhappy children of Father Damien, whom his death has left orphans. We would wish likewise to second the Royal Commission in the efforts which it is making to combat the terrible malady of leprosy and to prevent its progress.

Lastly, the third object we have in view is to contribute, as much as lies in our power, towards perpetuating the labours of the missionaries at the Sandwich Islands and Molokai, among the lepers whom Father Damien loved so much. Our last end will have been attained, if the perusal of
this book inspires resolutions in any generous souls to devote themselves to the same apostolate with him.

With this purpose we desire to favour the project of a College and the foundation of scholarships for the training of young ecclesiastics destined to perpetuate the labours, zeal, and devotedness of Father Damien, especially among the lepers of Molokai.

Auguste Pamphile De Veuster.
Life and Letters of Father Damien.

CHAPTER I.

His early Life and Entrance into Religion (1840—1859).

Joseph (Damien) De Veuster was born on January 3, 1840, at Tremeloo, in Belgium, a village situated six miles north of Louvain, and lying between the towns of Malines and Aerschot. His parents were of the middle class, good and earnest Catholics. They early instilled into their children those principles of piety and love of God which were to show themselves so markedly in their after careers. Of their four sons, two afterwards became priests—Auguste, in religion Père Pamphile, to whose kindness we owe many of the details of this biography, and Joseph, whom we know and love under the name of Father Damien.

When still a baby in the cradle, and while his parents were as yet undecided as to the name by which their little son should be called, a soldier cousin of the family, a man of most upright and pious character, chanced to visit them. In the course of conversation he was
requested by the parents to stand godfather for
the newly-born child. "Certainly," said the good
soldier, "with all my heart, nothing could please
me more; but only on one condition, that you call
him Joseph, after the Head of the Holy Family."
The condition was gladly consented to, and
Joseph accordingly was his name. His mother,
a woman remarkable for her earnest and simple
piety, had great influence over her little son, and
by her motherly precepts tutored his youthful
mind to love the ways of God, and all that is
high and noble. Her name was ever loved and
venerated by Father Damien, whose noble work
she lived to witness, and almost to see completed,
as she died but two years before him, at the age
of eighty-three. His father, a man of strong
religious principles, and of that earnest and solid
character for which the Belgian Catholic is so
well known, died shortly after Father Damien's
arrival in 1873 at the leper settlements of
Molokai.

As the little Joseph grew older, he gave early
signs of the love he had for purity, simplicity,
and for all that savoured of religion. Unlike his
companions, the ordinary rough games of boy-
hood did not engross his attention and claim his
affections. Instead of joining other boys at
their play, he loved to roam about in the fields
which encircled his country home. The neigh-
bouring shepherds knew him well, and it was
his delight to follow the sheep with them
to their pastures. He would play whole hours
together with the lambs in innocent glee. So well was this known by his companions, and by his family, that he was familiarly called by them on this account, "the little shepherd"—*le petit berger*. He also, even at the early age of four years, gave signs of that wonderful earnest love of prayer, and of the service of God, which ran through his whole life afterwards. His brother, who was two years his senior, and is now a priest, living near the old home of their childhood, well remembers how, on the occasion of a kermesse, or fair, being held in the neighbouring village at Whitsuntide, his little brother was missed from home even from early morning. As he did not return home, the family grew naturally anxious for their little Joseph. No one knew where he was to be found, until at last his old grandfather, who well knew the ways of his "dear little shepherd," thought that the church of the village where the fair was going on was the likeliest place to find the wanderer. Accordingly he set off in search of him, and there he found the child in the evening, all alone, praying under the pulpit with an air of simple piety and edifying recollection.

We give here one or two reminiscences of his childhood kindly furnished us by his brother.

"There was," he says, "in the house a collection of Lives of the Saints, written in old Flemish and printed in black-letter, a book two feet long and a foot and a half broad. Our mother could read this old type fluently, but we children,
accustomed to the modern printing of our school-books, could scarcely decipher a word. She used therefore to read it to us, while we listened with intense delight. We often insisted on her giving up her work and reading for us; especially the accounts of martyrdoms, and of the ancient hermits, such as Paul and Antony; and the old-fashioned wood-cuts were a great attraction for us. There were four of us children—our cousin, Henri Vinckx, who lived with us and was of the same age as I, our sister Pauline, two years older, and Joseph, two years younger than myself. We all used to walk to school together, and carried our slices of bread-and-butter in a basket for our dinner.

"One day on our way to the school, we took it into our heads to be hermits. It was half-past eight in the morning: we pushed our way into a copse by the side of the road, and put ourselves on our knees in solitude and silence. At noon our basket was opened, and we each took our share, but without a word spoken. So we remained, crouching down in silence. Evening came on; it was nine o'clock, when a passer-by catching sight of us, gave notice at home, and a servant was sent to fetch us in. I was then not quite ten years old, and I perfectly remember the spot, and the determined way in which my brother Joseph took to the character of hermit. The mention of our dinner-basket reminds me of another of our adventures. One special day our mother, to give us a treat, had
BIRTH-PLACE OF FATHER DAMIEN.
filled the basket with cakes, instead of bread-and-butter. After morning school, at half-past eleven, most of the children ran home for their dinner, while those who had come from any distance settled themselves on some bench or stone-seat to eat what they had brought with them. We were of this latter number, and our sister Pauline, as the eldest, distributed to each of us our share of cakes. At this moment a young mendicant, well known to us, called Susi van Baal, attracted no doubt by the cakes, came up to us and said, ‘This morning after you had gone to school, I took to your house a young magpie for each one of you.’ What joy this news filled us with! Our gratitude naturally suggested to us to give our benefactor part of our dinner. Sus immediately found himself in possession of four of our cakes. This did not seem enough return for such a magnificent present. ‘Let us give him the whole lot,’ said Joseph, ‘the poor fellow is always in want!’ We all agreed, the beggar-boy got the whole of our dinner, and we went without. Afternoon school seemed very long to us. Directly it was over, we ran all the way home, a mile and a half, and as soon as we could get breath asked for our magpies. ‘Magpies! Beggar-boy!’ Nobody had seen either one or the other. O, that rascal Sus! We got something to eat indeed, but hunger was the only seasoning; the cakes were gone past recall!

1 Sus is short for Francis.
"On another occasion, as we and some school-companions were on our way home, a car overtook us. We immediately cried out for a ride. The driver good-naturedly consented and stopped his horse, while we clambered up, some on one side, some on the other. Joseph was one of the last: he missed the step, and fell sprawling on his face just in front of the wheel; the horse started at the cries uttered by the children, and before the driver could control him, the wheel passed not only over my brother's body, but over his head as he lay with his face in the dust. They thought he was certainly killed; and some of our companions thoughtlessly ran on, and told our mother that Joseph had been run over. Once she came along the road in a terrible state, but found her boy only the worse for a bump on his head, and a bruise on his back. We cannot say it was a miracle, but we gratefully acknowledged a merciful interposition of Divine Providence."

It must have been at this first school that Joseph wrote his first letter to his parents, a fac-simile of which we give on the next page. The letter is evidently either dictated by the teacher, or copied from some school formula; for the phrasing of it is certainly not that of a child nine years old. It is a dutiful New Year's letter, and was probably carried home by the boy himself, not only as a token of love, but as a triumph of handwriting.
Doorheen de dam, zee, had bestendig
moete ik er bidden, de menschen uit
komen, die ik niet op bediend
Gevol aller goed te eten laten. Daar
zaar-tweevel er niet iets, zal zoonover
vaardig zijn, in den doolhuyze
menschen omverhouden. Mogt
Deze niets van zyn zaamhout
hoo geriep De zelve zo-wilde kled
zijnen menschenenginaem
maken. 't Ziet en
J. Devensler.
Veerester, den 31 Dec. 1818
LETTER I. (From the fac-simile).

Love and gratitude urge me to come and beg your acceptance of the prayers that I offer without ceasing to the Author of all good. This year, you may be sure, will be a happy one for you, if God deigns to hear them.

May this expression of the feelings of my heart, poor though it be, make the offering of my good wishes to be acceptable to you.

Your son,

J. De Veuster.

Werchter, December 31, 1848.

As the years of childhood ripened into those of boyhood, and then into the bright days of early youth, Joseph De Veuster was always known and respected by his companions. Whatever he did —and he was always very enterprising, and ready to contribute to the happiness of others—he threw his whole heart into it. Besides being of a frank and brave disposition, he was also endowed with great vigour of mind and of body, and a capacity for putting his hand to anything that the urgency of the case required. Yet though of such a noble character, the idea of becoming a priest had not as yet dawned upon him; nor did any of his family think of it for him. He had been sent to the "Cours Moyen" at Braine-le-Comte, where he received a commercial education suitable for the business man he was intended to be.

From this school the next three letters were written. The first is quite a model of an honest,
plucky schoolboy's letter; the second expresses a
gratitude and good feeling not too often found in
schoolboy's letters.

LETTER II., UNDATED.

My very dear Parents,—It is with great pleasure
that I take up my pen to write you a little letter
for the first time. By this time I have got quite
accustomed to this place. I talk to the Wallonos
a little, I know my work, my lessons, my com-
panions, and my bed. All in the house is very
clean and comfortable; our table is something
like the one at an annual fair, and the beer is
very good. Any Wallons that laugh at me I hit
with a ruler. Our master is a Walloon, he is very
good and very learned; he gives me lessons in
private.

The first day I was a little shy, and I didn't
like to ask for anything, though I had neither
books, pens, paper, or anything I wanted.
Afterwards I asked Mr. Derne, our master, for
some books, a brush, some pens, and some
copybooks. On Sunday we went for a walk. I
walked with a Walloon, and talked to him the
whole time, and asked the name of everything
I saw. On Whit Monday we went to the fair at
Soignies, with five Flemings, and saw a beautiful
procession.

Please let me know how my sister is, and all
the other news. I remain ever your very devoted
son,

J. De Veuster.
Early Life.

Excuse the mistakes in this letter, and write soon.

LETTER III., UNDATED.

Braine-le-Comte.

My dear Parents,—I am very glad to get a little free time, which gives me an opportunity of talking to you for a few moments. It is to you, my dear parents, that I owe not only my happiness, but also the education which I am receiving, and which I shall find useful at almost every moment of my life. I do not know how I can ever prove as I ought my gratitude for all the benefits you have conferred on me from my earliest years. I must ask you to forgive me for having delayed writing to you so long, but you know when one is at school to learn another language than his mother tongue, one has not always got time to busy oneself with letter-writing. If I knew that all my family were in as good health as I am I should be quite happy.

As the term is getting on, I may tell you now that about the new year there will be a week’s vacation, during which I hope to pay a visit to all at home. Until that day, which will be the 31st, I remain, with love to all, your devoted son,

J. De Veuster.

While he was in his eighteenth year, and still at this school, the Redemptorist Fathers gave a mission at which Joseph attended. It was at this time that the first call to a higher life came

1 French.
to him. "Joseph," says his cousin, a school-fellow of the same age, "came home from the mission evidently struck by something that had been said, for instead of retiring to rest, he used to stay up a good part of the night praying earnestly to God." Here evidently was the call for which Almighty God had prepared his soul from the early age of infancy by endowing it with an ardent love of Him for Himself, and a generosity in His service which had only to know the first inclination of the will of God, to be ready thoroughly and entirely to put it into execution. It was doubtless this idea that had pervaded the youth's fervent prayer during these nights of meditation and reflection. From that moment his whole soul longed to put his resolution to serve God in the religious state into immediate execution.

Up to the moment of that heaven-sent mission, Joseph had been leading the life of a good Catholic boy. He had probably his faults, like others of his age, and so far from having any aspiration for the dignity of the priesthood, he was, as we have seen, being educated for a business career. But now that he received his call, all ideas of the latter course were entirely banished from his mind, and the only thought that possessed him was the manner in which this sacrifice could best be made. The earnestness and thoroughness of his soul suggested at once the Order of the Trappists, as that which would best suit his generous disposition. But providentially before
he took any step towards carrying out this first impulse, Almighty God, who disposes all things sweetly to His own ends, prompted the young man to take the advice of his elder brother, his senior, as we have seen, by two years. This brother, who is now known as the Père Pamphile, was then already an ecclesiastical student of the religious Congregation which was approved by the Holy See in 1817, entitled the Society of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, better known as the “Picpus Fathers” — so called from the name of the house in the Faubourg St. Antoine in Paris, where they had their first establishment.

In letter iv., which follows, he throws out at the close a hint of his own vocation, à propos of his sister becoming a nun.

LETTER IV.

Braine-le-Comte, July 17, 1858.

My dear Parents,—I avail myself of the short time which I have still to stay at school to write you a little letter, and above all, to give you a proof of my affection. As it is now two months since I saw you, I think I ought to make inquiries about your health, but I hope that it continues as good as mine. As the holidays are coming very near, I suppose I may say a word about them.

The distribution of prizes here will probably take place this day four weeks, August the 15th, our head master told us so yesterday. I am sorry they are so near, because I shall reach home too
soon, and shall forget the French I have learnt, during the seven weeks that the vacation lasts.

I should like to stay here some weeks after the distribution of prizes if I had some one to stay with me. Of course I cannot stay alone. So I hope to come home on Monday, August the 16th. I believe the distribution at the Little Seminary at Malines will take place the same day, so that I may possibly return with my cousin Felix.

I was very glad, my dear parents, to receive the parcel you sent me, and also a letter from Pauline. You sent the very clothes I wanted. I was more anxious to read the letter than I was to look at the clothes. She told me she had left you on June the 8th. What a happiness for her! She has had the happiness of having fulfilled the most difficult task on earth. I hope my turn will come to choose the path I ought to tread. Will it be impossible for me to follow my brother Pamphile?

In conclusion, I remain your devoted son,

J. De Veuster.

The result of the conversation between the two brothers was that Joseph gave up the idea of becoming a Trappist in favour of joining his brother in the "Picpus" Congregation. The following letter, written from Braine-le-Comte, contains a respectful but firm demand for his parents' consent to his entering religion. From an expression he uses, it seems that he had previously broached the subject with them.
LETTER V.

Braine-le-Comte, December 25, 1858.

My dear Parents,—I cannot hesitate to write to you on this grand Christmas Day, for this great feast has brought me the certainty that God has called me to quit the world and embrace the religious state. Therefore, my dear parents, I ask you again for your consent; for without it I cannot venture to enter on this career. God's command to obey our parents does not apply only to childhood.

Do not think that in choosing the religious state I am guided only by my own will; I assure you that I do but follow the will of Divine Providence. I am not afraid that you will refuse me, since it is God who calls, and I am obliged to obey His call. For you to hinder your child from following God's will, would expose yourselves to terrible consequences from His anger, and would expose me to the irreparable misfortune of losing the vocation for which God has destined me from infancy, and would put in jeopardy my eternal salvation.

You know, my dear parents, that each individual is bound to conform himself to the designs of God in choosing a state of life, if he wishes to make his future happiness secure: do not, therefore distress yourselves at God's designs for me. Auguste writes me that I should certainly be admitted in his Congregation as "Frère de Chœur," that I should not fail to speak to the
Superior at the New Year, and should begin my novitiate a little after.

Hoping for this great happiness, I sign myself,
Your obedient son,
Joseph De Veuster.

Early in the year 1859, his father took him to pay a visit to Pamphile, and having some business that required his attention in a neighbouring town, he left Joseph to dine with his brother. Here was the opportunity for the step which he had long been desiring to take, and accordingly, when his father came back in the evening, he told him that he wished to return home no more, and that it would be better thus to miss the pain of farewell. His father, who was not altogether unprepared for this, consented, and they parted at the station. The two brothers returned to the house, and Joseph (who took the name of Damien in religion) presented himself for admission to the Congregation of which his brother was already a member. The frank, ingenuous youth pleased the Superiors. His strong, manly character could not but be admired, and the look of intelligence that was so marked on his countenance at once decided them to admit their new postulant. But owing to the exclusively business education which he had received, Joseph was completely ignorant even of the most elementary knowledge of Latin, and thus he was unfitted to join those who were intended for the sacred ministry, and for the present at least he was
only received in the humble position of a laybrother.

Joseph's joy was none the less great. To him the service of God was all in all. His sole thought in offering himself to the "Picpus Fathers" was to complete the resolution he had formed during his long night of prayer. Ever since that moment he had been yearning for something higher and more perfect, and his desire had increased day by day till it reached the climax by his offering himself to the Congregation towards which he felt his vocation lay.

Before, however, passing to his life in religion, we must give in his brother's words one or two anecdotes of a previous time. The first shows his taste for austerity while still residing at home; the second, his self-forgetting charity in assisting his poorer neighbours.

"It appears," says Père Pamphile, "that even before his entrance into religion, my brother felt an attraction for austerities. He kept hidden under his bed a long board, which at night he introduced into the bed, and lay upon it. In the morning, when he rose, he took good care to hide away the board again. But one morning he forgot it, and great was our mother's surprise to discover a plank in her son's bed. A severe reprimand put an end at least for a time to this practice of his.

"An old woman of eighty has lately expressed to me her grateful remembrance of a signal service which my brother did her in old times. 'We
had,' said she, 'a sick cow, and the farrier left us no hope of saving her. We were in despair at the prospect of losing what was really our main support. But Joseph, hearing of our misfortune, installed himself in the patient's stable, and insisted on dismissing the butcher who was there to slaughter her; in fact, he took such tender care of the poor beast, staying all night in her stable without closing his eyes, that the next morning the danger was past, and in a few days she was quite cured. Joseph saved her! In order to appreciate the greatness of the service, as felt by these poor people, we must remember that a good cow is worth a fortune to them.'
CHAPTER II.

Religious Life: Mission to the Sandwich Islands (1859—1865.)

Once safely lodged within the convent walls, Brother Damien set himself at once with ardour to perform the duties of his state. His natural earnestness of character enabled him to overcome the first trials of religious life, and the great interest he took in his work made him a subject of joy to his Superiors. While employed in the discharge of his duties, and for other reasons, he had many occasions of conferring with his elder brother, who was engaged in his studies for the priesthood.

Noticing the extraordinary ability his brother possessed, and the wonderful knack he had of picking up all kinds of useful knowledge, Pamphile began to teach him a few disjointed sentences and words in Latin, which the youth eagerly treasured up in his memory. Pamphile had only begun in joke, but wishing perhaps to encourage him in the pursuit of useful knowledge, he continued his quasi-lessons, so that in a very short time Damien was master of a good many sentences, besides the knowledge of
most of the elementary rules of syntax. His success was so wonderful that Pamphile now began to help him in earnest, probably with a view towards assisting his brother by this means to become a priest some day or other, if God should so will it.

Joseph, or Brother Damien, as he must now be called, threw his whole heart into his new study; and, incredible as it may appear, within six months he was so far acquainted and familiar with the Latin language that he was able to translate at sight any part of Cornelius Nepos quite fluently. By this time his Superiors had got to know of his great faculty for study, and consequently they advanced him to the rank of those who are engaged in their studies preparatory to the priesthood.

He was sent to Paris for his noviceship, whence the next two letters are written. The first of the two is a regular novice letter, with that wonderful capacity for pious reflections which almost invariably characterizes the first fervour of the young religious, and only in after-time develops into the less demonstrative but deeper sanctity of the labourer who has spent long years in the service of his God.

LETTER VI.

Paris, January 16, 1861.

My dear Parents,—To delay any longer sending you my best wishes on the joyful occasion of the new year would be to stifle the feelings of filial
love which urge me to write and express to you my affection. Alas! the immense distance between us does not allow me to throw myself into your arms, and to prove to you the feelings of love and gratitude with which my heart is so full. All that is left to me is to express it to you in writing, by wishing you a very happy new year, a long and peaceful old age, and the enjoyment of excellent health, and by making the incense of my feeble prayers ascend to Heaven, that He may deign to bestow copious blessings on you and on all your family.

These are the wishes, my dear parents, simple but sincere, which are addressed to the Most High by him who calls himself your devoted son, Father Damien.

I feel sure, my dear parents, that God will bestow on you the plenteous graces and the blessings unnumbered that I shall ask for you every day. But can I say the same of long life and good health? Alas, no! Experience and the case of one of my companions who was taken away from us a short time ago by a sudden and unforeseen death, makes me doubtful as to the fulfilment of my wishes in this respect. For who knows, if we could but penetrate the eternal counsels of God, but that we may not be already close to the end of our career, on the very threshold of eternity? Dear parents, we have all, I hope, begun this

1 It is the custom in France to give to young religious the title of "Père," even before they are priests.
year happily, but what assurance have we that we shall finish it thus? Perhaps before the end of December death will have snatched from us a devoted father, a loving mother, or one of the children who are so dearly loved? Truly the thought of the uncertainty of the morrow should produce in a soul most hearty contrition, but for us, Christians or religious, who look upon ourselves as exiles here below, and who long only for the dissolution of our body that we may enter our true country, there is, it appears to me, only joy and blessedness in the thought that each moment we get nearer to the last hour of our life. Then we shall hear those words of comfort and consolation, “Come ye blessed of My Father, possess ye the Kingdom I have prepared for you.” This is the blessing I wish for you and all those dear to me.

I have no news worth mentioning for the present. At Paris we live happy and peaceful. I study Latin and Greek from morning till evening. Every Wednesday we have a walk. To-day, I believe, we are going skating. I must ask Gerard to lend me his skates, because they don’t know how to skate here!

I have long been waiting to receive some news from you, but not a single letter has reached me. You might avail yourselves of the opportunity of sending by some novices from Louvain, who are to come to Paris next Monday. I must now stop joking, the bell is going to ring for dinner.

Good-bye, my dear parents. While waiting for
news from you, I commend myself to your charitable prayers, and am ever your devoted son,

**Damien.**

**LETTER VII.**

Paris, April 25, 1861.

My dear Parents,—It is always a welcome day when I have an opportunity of sending you some news! Short as my letter must be, I could not possibly let Father Superior go without giving him a few lines for you, in which I wish I could express to you all the sentiments of love and filial affection of which my heart is full.

You understand yourselves, my dear parents, better than I can express to you, the sorrow and regret with which I learnt the death of my grandmother. It was on Easter Sunday that I heard the first news of it. A novice who was in correspondence with Pamphile informed me of it during dinner. I changed colour, and it was as much as I could do to remain in the refectory. Happily my first emotion was of short duration, and it changed to joy when I reflected a little on the words, “All that God does is right.” Indeed, as we all must die, is it not an inestimable blessing that God has deigned to put an end to the pains and sufferings of this mother whom we loved so much, to reward her for the life of toil, and also of virtue, she has always led? Certainly she was ripe for Heaven, so that I have not the slightest doubt but she is now in possession of glory. It is this thought that makes me hope she will continue to have that motherly love for
us in Heaven which she always showed us on earth when we had the happiness of going to see her. She will intercede for us with God, and will beg Him to allow us to join her as soon as possible. Oh, my dear parents, the hope of meeting soon in glory not only our grandmother, Eugénie, and so many other faithful friends who have gone before us, but you and all the family, of whom I have made a sacrifice to God, is an incentive to me in moments of depression, helps me in my work, and makes me sigh every moment for the hour when my soul, freed from the prison of the body, shall go and join the choirs of saints, to sing with them and with you the songs of Heaven to all eternity.

To obtain this happiness, dear parents, let us begin from this very day to prepare for a happy death. Let us not lose a moment of the little time we have still to live; let us walk on in the way of holiness and justice, persuaded that at that moment we too shall have the happiness of hearing those consoling words: “Come, ye good and faithful servants, who have been faithful in small things, to take possession of the kingdom I have prepared for you.”

Of course you are anxious to hear how things are going on in Paris. Unfortunately, as I do not read the papers, I am not well up in the state of affairs. It is very seldom I go out in the town. Every Wednesday we go for a walk in a wood at some distance. About this wood I could say a great deal, as I know every avenue in it. About
a thousand men are always at work there, in order to make it more and more pleasant. They make new roads, and dig small water-courses, so that the water may run in every direction. But unfortunately, whereas before one could be quiet, and enjoy the pleasures of a walk, now we see nothing but gentlemen and ladies, riders and carriages at every turn, which are a great distraction and very annoying. What walks there are in the town have now no attraction for me, as they had at the outset; to my mind there is something very melancholy about them. So whenever there is any question of a choice as to our walks, I always leave the streets to those who are more curious than myself.

In our community everything is going on splendidly. We are all as active as hares, and get on capitaly with one another. The arrival of one of our missionary Bishops has given us an occasion of having Pontifical Mass in our chapel. It was on Easter Sunday; it was the first time I had seen this solemn ceremonial. Instead of two or three priests, twenty or twenty-five were at the altar. In the evening, after Vespers, the chapel was full of soldiers. The good Bishop held a short discourse, gave them his blessing, and then came Benediction. The soldiers sang, and served at the altar, in fact they did everything. They themselves were delighted. I believe this zealous missioner will shortly return to his mission in Oceania, and may possibly take some of us with him. Would you not be happy
Life of Father Damien.

if I were to be one? . . . Good-bye, my dear parents. I commend myself to your charitable prayers.

Give my kind love to all the family, especially to those who come to the fair.

I remain, in union with the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, your devoted son,

Father Damien.

After his noviceship he came to Louvain for his philosophical and theological studies, living in the same house with his brother Pamphile. We translate a few more anecdotes from his brother's manuscript reminiscences of this time.

"In the tribune of the domestic chapel, before a blank window, there was a decorated paper-blind bearing the picture of a Saint, as there is still before the windows in the interior of the chapel. The picture was that of St. Francis Xavier, the Apostle of the Indies. He was represented as a missioner, carrying in his hand the crucifix, in almost the same way as we see Father Damien himself in the photograph which he had taken before setting out for the missions. During his noviceship, daily about the same hour, he was to be seen on his knees before this picture, and praying fervently to the great Apostle of the Indies, whom he considered the exact model of the perfect missioner. As he himself acknowledged to his Master of Novices, who had questioned him on this head, he begged through the intercession of St. Francis Xavier the grace of
being some day sent on the Mission. The event has shown how his prayer was heard; and doubtless it was to form himself in the virtues of the Saint whose zeal and devotion to the salvation of souls he was so faithfully to imitate, that he chose that spot for such frequent visits.

"There were two things my brother could not stand: dissensions among religious brethren, and criticizing of Superiors. One day his zeal even went so far that, hearing two of the Brothers use angry words to one another, he exclaimed with a holy indignation: 'Are these the children of the Sacred Hearts?' and immediately quitted their company.

"He had the deepest sense of his own incapacity, and this feeling was with him everywhere. 'When I am in class,' he said to me one day, 'in the midst of all those clever fellows, I am veritably ashamed.'

"Père Wenceslas had made us an exhortation one day, in which he enforced these three points, silence, recollection, and continual prayer. There still exists in the house a desk which has these three words cut into it, SILENCE, RECOLLECTION, PRAYER. My brother, as if writing the words on paper was not enough, wished to have them always before his eyes; so he took his knife and cut them into the wood of his desk.

"Our father was an excellent Catholic: he went to confession and communion four times a year, which in old times was considered ample. On the first occasion of his coming to see us after
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Joseph's return from Paris, my brother tackled him strongly and affectionately on this point, and succeeded in persuading him to go more frequently.

"The day of my first Mass was a festival for the whole family. All were invited, father, mother, uncle, brothers, brother-in-law, and sisters-in-law; we were ten in all. Here was a grand opportunity for Joseph. He would make them all take the scapular, even though some might be disposed to decline it. So, without a word to me or to any one, he gets ready the requisite number of scapulars. Père Wenceslas was in the room with us, being perfectly intimate with all our family. At a pause in the conversation, Joseph rises, brings out the scapulars, and addressing Père Wenceslas begs him to bless them and put them on those present; adding that they were a souvenir that I offered to all who had taken part in the fête. It was delightful to see how all the heads bowed under the hand of the venerated priest who blessed these signs of predestination. As for me I exulted, and could not sufficiently admire the tact of my dear brother.

"We students used to dine at the second dinner; and it happened now and then that the meat fell short. My brother never grumbled; so far from it, he used to give his share of meat to his hungry neighbour, and content himself with soup and potatoes. I scolded him for this, telling him that he had as much need of it as another."
Another anecdote of this time shows his resolute and fearless confidence in carrying out the Superiors’ wishes, even without express command. When the Picpus Fathers were building the chapel of their Louvain house, the younger members assisted the workmen when and where they could. In preparing the site, a high and rickety chimney had to be taken down. All the workmen refused the dangerous job. Damien quietly asked for a ladder, got some one to steady it, and fetched down the chimney, brick by brick. The workmen stared—“Mon Dieu, quel homme!” they cried.

The next two letters were written from Louvain during this time of his ecclesiastical studies.

LETTER VIII.

Louvain, December 29, 1861.

My dear Parents,—I am delighted to see the time come round again when so many good wishes are sent up to the throne of the Most High for the welfare of parents and friends. I hasten to give you some proof of the love and gratitude of which my heart is full.

In wishing you a happy new year, I pray Heaven to shower down on you its blessings in abundance, to grant you good health joined with a peace of soul which nothing can disturb, to fill you with such love and charity that, after God, all your care shall be to love one another and make peace and union reign among the members of the family, and to give you great
success in your temporal affairs, but above all in the affairs of your eternal salvation. Such are the heartfelt wishes offered up daily on your behalf to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, by your affectionate son,

Father Damien.

LETTER IX.

Louvain, April 9, 1863.

My dear Parents,—According to the promise we made you on occasion of the happy family fête which we kept together, when your kind acceptance of our joint invitation gave us so much joy and happiness, we have arranged, with the concurrence of our Superior, to go home and pay you a visit in our turn. As next Tuesday will be the most convenient for the Superior as well as for us, our vacation not being yet ended, we will endeavour (four or five of us, that is) to be at Nin about twelve o'clock; unless you wish that Father Pamphile should sing or say Mass on that day at Tremelo. It would be a great pleasure for all members of our family, as well as for the villagers. In that case, will you kindly ask the permission of M. le Curé, and beg him to be good enough to give it out on Sunday from the pulpit, fixing ten o'clock on Tuesday as the hour. If you wish this, please send over some one on Monday to tell me.

I remain, your attached and grateful son,

Father Damien.
In the circumstances which led to the change of Damien's prospects, when he was transferred from the position of lay-brother to that of ecclesiastical student, we may surely see the hand of God, Who destined him for so great a work in His Vineyard. But God's hand was still more manifestly shown in the incident we have now to narrate, which led directly to his being appointed to the mission of the Sandwich Islands.

In 1863, when Damien was yet in minor orders, his brother Pamphile, now a priest, was ordered by his Superiors to prepare for an early departure to the Pacific Islands. These islands, one of the principal groups of which is known by the name of the Sandwich Islands, had been assigned in 1825 by Pope Leo XII. to the Fathers of the "Picpus Congregation," for the carrying out of one of the fundamental objects of their Institute, viz., the preaching of the Gospel to the heathen.

Pamphile had long been desirous of being sent to this mission, and he received the news with great joy. But, alas! just as he had made all the necessary preparations for the voyage, and had secured his passage in an outward-bound vessel, the hand of God fell upon him and he was laid low by an attack of typhus fever. To his bitter disappointment, he was thus forbidden to go. His brother Damien, however, as though struck by a sudden inspiration, went to the sick man's bedside, and inquired whether it would be a consolation to him if he should go in his place. On receiving an eager answer in the affirmative,
he resolved to make an instant application for the appointment.

He did not take the advice of the Superiors of the house in which he was then residing, fearing their refusal, but he wrote at once to the Superior General in Paris, asking him for his brother's place, and begging him "not to throw away the passage-money." Much to the astonishment of the local Superior, an order came for his departure in his brother's stead. The letter arrived about dinner-time, and the Superior, rather annoyed, threw it to him in the refectory, saying, "It is rather silly of you to wish to go before you are a priest." But Damien, nothing daunted, snatched up the letter, and rushing to his brother's bedside, waved it over his head, exclaiming, "Yes, I am to go instead of you! I am to go instead of you!" Then, without waiting for his dinner, he set off to say good-bye to his family: for there was no time to lose if he was to catch the ship before it started from Bremerhaven. His mother and his sister-in-law accompanied him in a last visit which he wished to make to Our Lady of Montaigu, a celebrated shrine not far from his native town of Tremeloo. He had often gone there before. It was the custom of the members of his community to make a pilgrimage there from time to time. It was some distance from Louvain and the pilgrims used to start about midnight in order to be there for the early Mass at the shrine. In order to get something like a night's rest before starting they used to retire at
a very early hour on the previous evening. Not so Damien, he did not go to bed at all on these occasions but spent the time in prayer, and was always found on his knees when they came to call him for the start.

In this last visit, during the walk back, he seemed much moved and pre-occupied, and for the greater part of the way walked apart from the rest. When he rejoined them, they asked what was the matter. "I was overcome," he said, "at thinking that I shall never more see Our Lady of Montaigu. I have asked her to obtain for me from our Lord the grace of labouring in His Vineyard for twelve years." The event shows that the Blessed Virgin not only heard his prayer, but doubled the favour asked, for his labours in the Sandwich Islands lasted twice twelve years.

He returned the same day to Louvain, and set out for Paris on his way to the port of embarkation. Here he had his photograph taken. A copy of this photograph,¹ now in his brother's possession, gives us an insight into his character, as he was at the age of twenty-three. In the photograph you have, looking you straight in the face, a strong manly countenance, plain, and of a very Flemish cast, every lineament of which speaks of a solid character. Clasped close to his breast he holds a large crucifix with an earnestness that speaks out his whole soul.

¹ This photograph has since been published by the London Stereoscopic Company. The engraving at the beginning of this volume has been taken from it.
The following letter was written just before sailing from the German port of Bremerhaven. In the postscript he speaks of this photograph, copies of which he sent home, as souvenirs to remind them to pray for him.

LETTER X.

Bremerhaven, October 30, 1863.

My very dear Parents,—After a three days' retreat at Paris, we left the mother-house, animated with truly apostolic courage. From 9 a.m. on Thursday we travelled express till noon on Friday, I may almost say without stopping. The vessel which was to take us to our destination was ready to start, so we went on board at once. By two o'clock our mass of luggage had been placed in our berths. We dined for the first time with our captain; he received us very kindly. We are treated like lords, and want for nothing. Five good Fathers from Paris take the greatest possible care of us. It seems to me that we have clothes enough for at least three years.

The ten Sisters who are with us are wonderfully courageous. Their cabin is next ours, but we hold no communication with them except through our Superior, Father Christian. We have very small cabins, in which there are two beds placed one above the other. Our life on board will be as if we were in a convent: we shall keep the same rules as at Louvain. We shall have our fixed hours for prayer, study, and recreation, in the saloon which serves as a refectory,
and for all else we have to do. We have been fortunate enough to have two Masses, at which all the Brothers and Sisters communicated.¹

At noon on Saturday we shall leave the harbour, trusting ourselves to Providence, and to the direction of an experienced captain, who has made this voyage every year for the last seven or eight years. His name is Geerken. Although a Protestant, he is very kind to us, and always dines with us. There is only one passenger besides ourselves.

We are now, my dear parents, on the eve of leaving not only our fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, not only our second family, our brethren of Louvain and Paris, but also the fair continent of Europe, to cross an ocean whose billows often threaten to engulf us, for the purpose of living among men who are uncivilized, and, according to some accounts, more like brutes than human beings. The sacrifice is great indeed for one who tenderly loves his parents, his family, his brethren, and the land of his birth. But the voice that has called upon us to make a generous sacrifice of all is the voice of God Himself. It is our Saviour Who says to us as to His first Apostles: "Going, teach all nations, instructing them to observe all My commandments, and

¹ The Reverend Mother who accompanied these Sisters to Bremerhaven, passing through Louvain on her return to Paris, said to Père Pamphile, "Your brother is a Saint, a St. Aloysius; no one can see him serve Mass without being struck by his extreme devotion."
Life of Father Damien.

behold I am with you all days till the consummation of the world.”

These last words of our Saviour are very consoling to us. Jesus Christ is in an especial manner with missionaries. It is He Who directs all their steps, Who preserves them from all danger. It is He Who commands the winds to cease, and the sea to be calm, the wild beasts to depart from us, and our spiritual enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh, to leave us in peace. It is He Who in the midst of trials, contradictions, and sufferings, will cause us to enjoy a happiness of which he who has never experienced it can form no idea. For the graces of our state are so powerful that the greatest difficulties and trials do not trouble us. We already feel this, for when about to launch out into the midst of a stormy ocean, not only are we free from fear (this the sailors are), but we are as merry as can be. After being half an hour together, we are often quite tired with laughing and telling funny stories.

So, my dear parents, do not trouble yourselves in the least about us. We are in the hands of God, of an all-powerful God, Who has taken us under His protection. All I ask you to do is to pray that we may have a good voyage, and that we may have courage to fulfil the holy will of God, everywhere and at all times. This is our life! Take also for your own this adorable will as manifested in the laws and commandments of God and of the Church, and in the voice of
the priests our Lord has given you, as the infallible rule of your life, of all your words and actions. This will it is which is represented in the Gospel as the narrow but tranquil way which leads to Heaven.

Good-bye, dearest parents, henceforward we shall not have the happiness of seeing one another, but we shall always be united by that tender love which we bear to one another. In our prayers especially let us often remember one another, and unite ourselves to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, in which

I remain, ever your affectionate son,

FATHER DAMIEN.

P.S.—In recognition of all your kindness towards me, I am sending you a portrait of myself framed, for which please send to our house in Louvain. You will receive twenty smaller copies, which the photographer will send you direct from Paris. I am going to write to Pauline directly, so I can enclose one myself for her. Please say your Rosary every evening for the missioners.

Farewell, dear parents, farewell. Be careful always to lead a good Christian life, and never let the slightest wilful sin stain your soul. Walk in the right way. This is the last thing I ask of you; promise it me, and I shall be without fear on your behalf; I shall look forward with confidence to seeing you again in the heavenly country. Again, farewell; may Heaven bless
your declining years. May the Blessed Virgin grant you the grace of a holy death, which will be followed by a happy eternity. This will be my daily prayer. Farewell. With heartfelt love,
on affectionate son,
\[signature\]

From another source, also preserved at the Mission Hospital, is the following letter to his brother, Pere Pamphile, written immediately after landing, he speaks of the voyage as an awful one: though, as we shall see, after comparing notes with the older missioners he modifies this judgment. It was, however, clearly bad enough. They were involved in a terrible storm off Cape Horn, and the ship was in evident danger of foundering. For several days they were beaten about at the mercy of the fierce winds and currents that are so well known for their violence, and for the many disasters that they have caused round this promontory. Other vessels seemed to have suffered, for he saw quantities of wreckage floating by. To ensure the safety of the vessel, Damien began a novena to the Blessed Virgin, ending on the feast of her Purification, February 2, 1864. Hardly had he concluded this novena than the storm began to abate, and they made their way, without any more danger, out of the dreaded straits. But he was not to reach the scene of his labours till he had experienced another storm lasting for twenty-four hours, which took place in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Writing after-
wards to his brother, he playfully calls in question the appropriateness of its title, thinking that a less pacific name would better suit it. At last to his great delight he reached Honolulu, the capital of the Sandwich Islands, on the feast of his patron, St. Joseph, March 19, 1864.

The Hawaiian or Sandwich Islands, a group of eight inhabited and four uninhabited islands lying, as has been said, in the North Pacific Ocean, at a distance of nearly 2,000 miles from the nearest point of mainland, were discovered in 1778 by the English sailor, Captain Cook, who was unfortunately slain by the natives on his return in the following year. The largest island is Hawaii, which sometimes gives its name to the whole group, though their discoverer called them “the Sandwich Islands.” Honolulu, the capital and seat of government, is on one of the smaller islands, Oahu, the most central of the group. A mutilated form of Christianity had been introduced, mainly through American Protestant missionaries, early in this century; and in 1825 Pope Leo XII. gave the charge of bringing in the true religion to the “Picpus Fathers,” as has been already mentioned. These good Fathers had been thirty-eight years at work in this mission when their new helper arrived. Before he could actually assist in evangelizing the natives, it was necessary that he should be ordained priest, for hitherto he had only received minor orders, having been interrupted in the course of his studies to join the mission. After two months’ preparation
at Honolulu, he was ordained priest at Whitsuntide, 1864, and was soon set to work in the laborious and fatiguing toil that invariably falls to the lot of the Catholic missionary.

We insert here a long letter to his brother, written in August of this year.

LETTER XI.

Hawaii, August 23, 1864.

V.C. J.S.  

My dear Father Pamphile,—Last March I sent you a detailed account of the principal occurrences during our long voyage from Europe to Oceania. From what other missionaries say we were most favoured by Providence during the voyage, both in the matter of fine weather and in the shortness of the time that we took in coming; the journey too was not expensive. I am sorry I am neither a poet nor a writer, to send you a good description of my new country, so I shall content myself with saying a few words about it.

Our archipelago lies on the border of the tropics, between twenty-one and twenty-three degrees north from the equator. For two months, June and July, we have the sun directly over our heads; still the heat is not so great as I thought. The climate is delightful, so that strangers easily become accustomed to it, and generally enjoy better health here than in their own country. The archipelago is made up of eight islands, four

* These initials stand for *Vivat Cor Jesu Sacratissimum.*
of which are large and four small. Hawaii, the
one on which I am stationed, is larger than all
the others together. It is as large as Belgium,
if not larger. In the centre are three volcanoes,
two of which appear to be extinct. The third is
still active, and it is in the neighbourhood of this
that Providence has destined me to be placed.
From one end of my district to the other you
have to walk on lava, that is, the stone and iron
that the immense heat of the volcano has melted
at different times and caused to flow towards the
sea.

It is only a few years ago that the principal
place in the island, Hilo, whence I am sending
you these lines, was almost overwhelmed with
this boiling lava, which nothing can withstand,
not even the mountains, which it melts like every-
thing else and sweeps away in its course. When
once it is cooled, it is in some places like a smooth
iron road, while in others there is nothing but
sharp stones, over which it is impossible to walk.
I have not as yet had occasion to pass by the
mouth of the volcano, but the other Fathers tell
me there is nothing like it in the world for giving
one an idea of Hell. It measures from three to
four leagues in circumference, and its length is
between a hundred and a hundred and fifty yards.
Looking into it in the evening, you see quite
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HAWAII.—ERUPTION OF VOLCANOES.
melted, and the newly-molten matter coming up from the interior of the earth, commences to flow towards the sea until it gradually cools. Sometimes it flows a distance of from fifteen to twenty leagues. From what I have told you, dear Father, you can form some idea of the island of Hawaii, to which the Lord of the vineyard has sent me to work for the salvation of souls. The first two months after our arrival we spent in the central island, Oahu, where Mgr. Maigret permanently resides, and where the King and his Ministers also reside. The inhabitants of Honolulu alone number about 10,000 souls. The island itself is not very large. Father Albert, in company with Father Christian, went round it on horseback in a week, preaching and hearing the confessions of the Christians in the villages around the island. The interior is uninhabited.

Father Liévain, Father Clement and I, spent this time in the college, preparing ourselves for the reception of priest's Orders, so as to be ready to enter upon our missionary duties immediately afterwards. But how short was our preparation for so exalted a ministry! We were ordained priests on the Ember Saturday in Whitsun week, and next day said our first Masses in the Cathedral of Honolulu. Recall the feelings you yourself experienced, the day you had the happiness to stand at the altar for the first time to offer the Divine Victim of our salvation. Mine were the same with this difference, that you were surrounded by friends and brothers in religion, while I was
surrounded by children, recent converts, who had come from all parts to see their new spiritual Father, whose company they had so long desired, to protect them against the wolves which were pursuing them. To ride. So that, dear Father, were not afraid to go back, meditate it would be to break the faith of the emotions; experiences in going to give the Bread of Life to a hundred persons, many of whom had, perhaps, been on their knees before their ancient gods, and who now, clothed in white, approached the Holy Table with much modesty.

Father Liévain sang the High Mass, and in the evening delivered his first sermon in English with great success. English is very much used here. I recommend you in your journey here to do as we did; apply yourself diligently to the study of it. A few days after our ordination, Monseigneur assigned to each of us our field of labour, sending Father Liévain to the college, and Father Clement and myself to the large island of Hawaii. We left Honolulu with His Lordship on board a steamer in the beginning of June. Next morning we reached the island of Maui, where we were fortunate enough to meet three other Fathers. I had barely time to offer Mass in their beautiful new church, before the whistle of the steamer gave the signal to go on board. It was very hard to have to leave these good Fathers so soon without knowing when I should see them again. Almighty God knew well how I longed to stay with them a few days at least, to profit from their
long experience in the sacred ministry, the exercise of which is so difficult here.

We went on board, expecting the next day to arrive at our own island. But this was not to be so, for scarce had we left the harbour when the ship caught fire. The fire had already reached the outer casing of the ship before it was noticed. There was just time to extinguish it before the wood was burnt through, so that the water did not get in. We turned back immediately, and once more found ourselves safe and sound at the house of our Fathers at Maui, where we had to wait till another vessel arrived. I myself was not very sorry for this. The Bishop, however, was very anxious that we should reach Hawaii before the feast of SS. Peter and Paul, the day fixed for blessing a new church which our lay-brothers had just built. One week passed and a second and no ship arrived. On the Sunday following Father Aubert sent me to a district five or six leagues away to exercise the duties of the sacred ministry. There, for the first time, I preached and heard confessions in the language of the country. This was three months after my arrival. Returning next morning I learnt to my astonishment that Monseigneur and Father Clement had gone on with a schooner which had called on Sunday. What a fix I was in! How was I to rejoin them? There was no ship to be had! A week, then a fortnight passed, and no vessel made its appearance! It was not until a week after the feast of St. Peter that I was able to leave, when the steamer, which had been under-
going repairs, was able to sail. I landed where the new church is, expecting to find the Bishop. I hoped to go with him to my district, which is on the opposite side of the island. To reach it we must have taken a journey of about sixty leagues on horseback. Well, I found the two Fathers of this district, but Monseigneur and the two Fathers belonging to my side of the island had gone five days before! I thought of joining them as quickly as was possible, but where could I get a horse strong enough for such a journey? Certainly I might go on foot, but how could I find the way?

At last the Superior of the place decided that I should go the week following with him, when he was going to accompany Father Clement to his district. It was a distance of about thirty leagues, a considerable part of which was traversed on foot. Oh, how delighted were the Christians who had been deprived of the consolations of religion since the death of Father Eustace, four years ago, to see their new priest arrive! On Sunday, there were as many heretics as Christians in the crowd which collected to see us. Father Clement's district is a very large one; he has at least twenty leagues to travel in order to see all his flock of Christians. I hope that in time he will become an accomplished rider. The first year, especially, he will have enough work to satisfy his zeal. How many people to baptize, how many confessions to hear, seeing that for the last four years they have only been visited two or three times in the course of the year. I should have liked to have remained
with him some time, but duty called me elsewhere.

On Tuesday the 20th of July, Providence sent me a guide, as of old one was sent to Tobias, to conduct me to my mission. We left early on Wednesday morning, and walked as far as we could in three days and a half. On Saturday I reached the end of my journey, and to my surprise I found Monseigneur, with Fathers Charles and Celestine, whom I had to help on this side of the island.

On the Sunday Monseigneur gave Confirmation to those who had not received it, and next day took his departure on board a small vessel to return to Honolulu, where he arrived in safety some days later. I myself, longing to see the flock which the Divine Shepherd designed to entrust to His poor unworthy servant, went, on the Thursday after the 28th of July, to my district (Puna), which lies between that of Father Charles and that of Father Celestine.

I think I shall require fully three days to get from one end to the other. In every direction there are little villages scattered about, and for seven or eight years there has been no resident priest there. It was only in passing that some priest or other could visit the Christians, and he would have very little time to instruct catechumens. Before leaving, the Bishop told me that I must remember that the mission was quite in its infancy. Indeed, I found no church in which to say Mass, but two are now in course of con-
struction. With nothing more than a portable altar that I have with me, I sometimes say Mass in a native hut, where the Christians are accustomed to assemble on Sunday for prayers. I find sheep everywhere, but many of them are still outside the fold.

Calvinism has drawn many into its net. However, the news of a priest for Puna has made them think about religion, and on my first round our good Lord gave me twenty-nine to regenerate in the holy waters of Baptism, whilst others are preparing to receive it.

After what I have told you, you can form some idea, at least, of the difficulties a missionary encounters in the exercise of his sacred ministry. Here we are in circumstances very different to those of priests in other countries. Here one’s flock is scattered, and surrounded by heretics, who employ all the means in their power to seduce them, and they succeed more easily with the converts, who have not the faith deeply rooted in their hearts. Besides this, there are the laws of the country, which are but little in favour of permanent marriage among the people, their only object being to free them from the condition of savages. But apart from these two evils, inconstancy and incontinency, you could not wish for better people; gentle, pleasant-mannered, exceedingly tender-hearted, they neither seek to amass riches, or live in luxury, or dress much, but are most hospitable, and ready to deprive themselves even of necessaries in order to supply
your every want if you have to ask a night's shelter from them. Even obstinate heretics will treat a priest well if he comes to their house—but they have only done this since their prejudices against our religion have been removed. They never said anything unpleasant to me. When one speaks to them of religion they readily admit that we are right, and they are in error, but it is the fear of their minister which holds them back from the Church. Generally they are of opinion that the Calvinistic creed and the Catholic faith are both good—an error which is often hard to remove. If Providence were to send us a holy priest like the Curé d'Ars, these stray sheep would soon be gathered in. Among the volcanoes of Puna I should wish above all to have that pure love of God, that ardent zeal for the salvation of souls, with which M. Vianney, the Curé d'Ars, was inflamed. Oh, my dear brother, I implore you, pray yourself and get the prayers of others, both for myself and for my poor flock, that our Divine Saviour may vouchsafe to kindle in our hearts that fire which He came to cast upon the earth, and which He earnestly desires should be kindled. If you can help to kindle this fire in the heart of the pastor—which is, alas! often but too cold—how many sick and aged persons will be sought out by him in order that they may be regenerated by water and by the Holy Spirit before entering upon another life; how many of the young and ignorant will be snatched by him from the grasp of their heretical teachers! And if you can help further,
my dear brother, to kindle this Divine flame in the hearts of the newly-converted, what abundant fruits of faith and holiness will be ripened for the heavenly harvest? See that you obtain the prayers of many Christians for your poor brother seeking the lost sheep on the distant shores of Oceania, that he may not yield to the innumerable temptations surrounding him, and that, his words being accompanied by the unction of the Spirit, he may gather a great number of stray lambs into the fold of the Church, and bring them in safety to the celestial pastures.

My dear Father, while I am writing you this letter some of my neophytes have come to speak to me. They, in their turn, wish to express to you in their own tongue their love for the Catholic Church, their love for priests, even for those who live five thousand leagues distant from them. Do not turn a deaf ear, then, to their entreaty—they ask for rosaries to wear round their necks. They ask for priests—you who have the vocation to be a missionary, do you ask and you shall receive—incite others to come and join us, and train them for the work. The harvest is now really abundant, since the prejudices roused by the Calvinists are removed. These false ministers, who were formerly at the head of the Government, have been humbled. The King and all the Government are turning against them—the best thing that could happen. I want you, dear Father, to buy two bells for my two new churches; they must be smaller than the one at
Louvain which Mgr. d'Abierie blessed. Towards this you may ask my parents to give something, as well as Madame Dieudonné and other charitable persons. And you may also send me one or two hundred intentions for Masses, which I can say here.

As I have not time to write to all the Fathers and Brothers of Louvain, please read them this letter, and send a copy of it to Uden as well as to my parents—for whom it would be well to translate it into Flemish.

Good-bye, dear brother Pamphile, do not ever forget me in the Memento of your Mass. I shall do as much for you.

Your brother in union with the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

FATHER DAMIEN, Missionary Priest.

My kindest regards to the Fathers and Brothers at Louvain.

P.S.—Returning from my district at the end of October, I find my letter has not been sent. I have twice made the round of my district in these two months. By means of a good number of Baptisms I have increased my little flock. I went to see the volcano at work. I went down quite close to the fire, it is a terrific sight. I have been to see Father Celestine's district, which is in very good working order. There are six chapels, by far the greater number of the people are Catholics. I rode upon a mule nearly all the way. Now that I have been the round of my district, I am going to rest for a week, and then
begin at once to visit the district of Father Charles, who is unable to do so himself. Then I go on as far as the house of Father Clement, and after remaining a few days with him, I shall retrace my steps, revisiting all the Christians of Hilo and Puna, after which I shall go to see Father Celestine. I shall have to travel over at least sixty leagues. I am still very happy, and my health is good, quite as strong and robust as it was in Europe. I have just had a letter from Father Liévain. The College is getting on very well, though there are only two Fathers there. English is taught to all, and Latin to some pupils. I have also received a letter from one of the Picpus Brothers, but not a word from Belgium.

Remember you must pay the postage of your letter to Nigort, about a franc and a half perhaps, otherwise it will never reach me. I am anxiously waiting for news from Louvain and from home. Let me have plenty of news.

This is my address in English—

Oceania, Sandwich Islands,

DAMIEN DE VEUSTER, Catholic Priest,
Catholic Mission, Hilo.

We insert here a description by an eye-witness of the lake of fire alluded to by Father Damien at the beginning of the preceding letter. It lies in the crater of Kilauea, the ever-active volcano of Hawaii :

1 Mr. Edward Clifford in the Nineteenth Century, June, 1889.
“It is round, like a cup, and is about three hundred feet in diameter (as large as a small circus). Its rim is about ten feet high, and it is full of boiling lava. The lava is as liquid as thick soup, and of a bluish grey colour, with occasional greenish tints. It keeps simmering and heaving, and then it breaks in all directions into most lovely vermillion cracks, changing into violet and then into dead grey. Nearly all round the edge it shows scarlet, and tosses up waves which are not unlike the waves of the sea, only they are red-hot, and the spray is the colour of coral or of blood. Above them there is often a beautiful lilac or violet effect. This violet atmosphere of the fire is one of the loveliest of the phenomena. Sometimes the edge of the volcano gets undermined with its fiery waves, and topples over with a crash, and all the time a roaring sound goes on like the roaring of the sea.

“And now, as one watches, one suddenly sees a scarlet fountain beginning to play in the middle of the lake. At first it is about two feet high, with golden spray, then it gets wilder and larger and more tumultuous, tossing itself up into the air with a beautiful kind of sportiveness—great twistings of fiery liquid are springing high into the air, like serpents and griffins. It really is exquisite, and almost indescribable. I visited the volcano six times, and generally saw some these fire fountains, and the roaring, tossing waves at the edge of the volcano never ceased.

“It is necessary to look out for a sudden change...
of wind at Kilauea. I had almost to run one day to escape being stifled with fumes of sulphur. I picked up a lovely scarlet honeybird which had rashly flown that way and met a sulphurous death.

"My last view of the volcano was at night, when its colour was nearly that of a primrose. Enormous waves and fountains of fire were playing and tossing up wreaths of spray, which sometimes fell almost at my feet, and lay like red-hot snakes till they cooled into pitchiness."
CHAPTER III.

Work in Hawaii (1865—1873).

In the next letter we have, he speaks of his first parish in the large island of Hawai

LETTER XII.

V.C.J.S. Sandwich Isles, March, 1865.

My very dear Parents,—It is a great happiness to me whenever I have an opportunity of sending you news of myself, of reminding you, my dear parents, that in the midst of the great Pacific, on an island about one hundred and fifty leagues in circumference, you have a son who loves you, a priest who prays for you, a missionary who passes his time seeking the lost sheep of our adorable Saviour. I have plenty of cares and troubles here, my dear parents. Still I am very happy.

Our Bishop has just made over to me a new parish, a little larger than that of Tremeloo. It takes me quite a month to get round it. Here we cannot travel by rail, or by carriage, or on foot. How then, think you, do we perform these long journeys? Well, we have got mules here and horses. I have just bought two—a very good horse for one hundred francs and a mule for
seventy-five—in order to be able to travel about as much as I like. Sometimes I shall have to go by boat. The poor islanders rejoice when they see Kamiano and me coming. I like them immensely, and would willingly give my life for them, like our Divine Lord. So I do not spare myself, when it is a question of going to visit the sick or any other persons seven or eight leagues distant. There was a severe earthquake here this year, as is often the case.

The Government is quite changed now. Whereas formerly heretics held all the power, now they are entirely excluded from it. I don’t know yet if that will further the interests of religion or not. Idolatry is not yet totally abolished here. Often when any one is sick they offer sacrifices to the heathen gods. Many, however, are already converted, and day by day we are seeking to convert others.

Pray for the poor missionaries, my dear parents, for we have many difficulties here. Good-bye, my dear parents. Give my kind love to all. Tell Léonce, Gérard, and Victor to write to me—do let me have some tidings of you. Do not be at all anxious about me, but pray that I may persevere.

Your devoted son,

FATHER DAMIEN, Missionary Priest.

In a letter to his brother at this period, he says, “Truly I ought to be proud of my district, for it is as large as the whole diocese of Malines.”
This large parish, or district, contained seven churches, which he served in turn at regular intervals, making the journeys on horseback. We see that in the letter to his parents immediately preceding he minimizes its size. It was given him at his own request; for seeing that the Father in charge of it was weaker than himself, and less burden for this heavy and laborious one.

To give some idea of the fatigue that fell to his share, we will relate the following instance. One day he arrived on horseback at the foot of a high and steep mountain, behind which he remembered that there was a Christian settlement not yet visited by him. Determined to visit it now, he tethered his horse and began the ascent, climbing up on his hands and feet, owing to the steep nature of the path. The summit reached, he found himself on one side of a precipitous ravine, which lay yawning at his feet. No human habitation could he see, but in the distance a second mountain as high as the first one met his undaunted gaze. Without hesitation he commenced the descent, and courageously began to make his way up to the second hill in the same manner as the former. But what was his disappointment when he had gained the summit! There was no sign of a church or village to encourage him. Below him he saw a large piece of flat country, and then beyond that still, another hill. Any ordinary man would have turned back in
despair, but one with a spirit like his, whose only aim was the saving of souls, could not be so easily daunted. So with a prayer of resignation and patience he persevered in his journey over the third mountain and then another ravine, till he had to stop through sheer fatigue. His hands were now torn and lacerated, and the blood flowed freely; his feet, too, were wounded, for the boots that should have protected them were cut, and rendered almost useless by the hard treatment they had received. As he looked upon his blood-stained hands and feet, he gained new courage, and calling to mind the sufferings of our Lord, he said, "Courage! the good God also has shed His Blood for those souls yonder!" He started again on his labour of love, and when at last, travel-worn and exhausted, he reached his destination, he was well repaid for his sufferings by the joy of the Christians, who welcomed for the first time their new-found Apostle. They told him they had been deprived of the consolations of religion since the death of their late pastor, Father Eustace.

Another instance of the wonderful energy of the missioner will do much towards giving a good idea of the character of Father Damien, and shows the inborn genius he had for organization, which he displayed so well afterwards at Molokai. While still at Hawaii he wrote to his brother as follows: "Our Christians here cannot all have Sunday Mass, so do you know what we do? When we find a young man that shows any apti-
tude, we give him a special training. He is taught the Epistles and Gospels of the Sunday, and then he is commissioned to preside in the capacity of prayer-leader, over some Christian settlement, to which the priest cannot come. They sing hymns and have public prayers, and then my young 'lector' addresses them in burning words. This plan has an evident blessing from God.'

The following extract from Père Pamphile's manuscript notes shows the great bodily strength and robust constitution of the indefatigable missionary about this time. "Being at Versailles," he says, "in the year 1869, I had the honour of a conversation with Mgr. Maigret, Vicar-Apostolic, who had come to Europe to attend the Vatican Council. Among other details which his lordship gave me about my brother, he spoke of his great muscular strength. 'The natives are in constant wonder at it; they think it a miracle, when they see Father Damien carrying a beam of wood up the hill all by himself, which three or four of them together could scarcely lift.'"

He wrote to his parents in 1869 the following letter.

LETTER XIII.

Kohala, Hawaii, Oct. 12, 1869.

My dear Parents,—I have at length received your welcome letter. For a long time I have been distressed and in suspense about you, not knowing what might have happened. I learn to my great joy that you are in good health. As
for me, thanks to God, I am very well: I have never been ill since I have been here. My duties are always the same. In this last year I have built two new churches, one of which I have handed over to another priest together with half of my vast district; so that my work is a bit easier. At present I have three churches to serve, at fifteen miles distance from one another. I say Mass at each in turn on Sundays. The last church I built is a fine-looking building with a nice little tower. I am still waiting for the bell that Auguste has so often promised me, but it never comes. Apart from the manual labour, which I furnish almost entirely myself, this wooden church has cost me about four thousand francs. After spending my last farthing, I was still four hundred francs in debt; but Providence came to my aid. As there is no bell yet, we call our people together with a horn.

Continue to pray for the conversion of these heathen. Perhaps it is in consequence of your prayers, that God has granted me the conversion of the forty or fifty pagans and heretics whom I have baptized this last year. The best way to render our prayers acceptable to God, is to purify our conscience by the Sacrament of Penance, and to live always in His fear. I am myself exposed here to many dangers of body and soul. But knowing that I can do nothing of my own strength I put all my confidence in our Lord, Who has accepted my service, and nourishes me daily with His Body and Blood in the Holy
Sacrifice. It is, moreover, a great consolation to me to offer Mass now and then for my dear parents, my brothers and sisters.

You must not be surprised, my dear father, that our natives here use neither spoons nor forks, neither tables nor chairs. It is the custom to eat with their fingers, and to sit on the ground: but they have nice mats in their houses to sit on. It is the same thing in the church. At first I made benches for them, but they would not use them, and I find it much more economical. On Sundays they are generally well dressed, but on week-days they go half-naked. The native population is continually decreasing.

Write me as soon as you can, and give me a little more news. How many children have Léonce and Gérard? What has become of the mill?

Your affectionate son,

Joseph.

The following letter is supposed to have been written about the close of 1870, or beginning of 1871.

LETTER XIV.

V.C.F.S.

Kohala, Hawaii, Sandwich Islands.

My very dear parents,—My mother's letter, which reached me in January, 1870, brought me the good news that, thanks be to God, all my family are very happy and enjoying good health.
YOUNG HAWAIANS EATING FROM THEIR CALABASH.
I was surprised to find that only my mother wrote, and there was not a single word from my father, until I learnt that he was suffering from fever. I had fever myself for several weeks, but now I am quite well, thank God. My duties are still the same. Last year a priest came to assist me, so that my work is a little lighter now.

My companion and I live at opposite ends of our immense district; we each serve three churches four leagues distant from one another. We decorate our churches as well as we can. The Sisters have made us some flowers, and the tapers I make myself from the produce of my own beehives. From time to time, you see, I can allow myself the luxury of a little honey.

Our Bishop is still in Rome, whence he is to bring some priests, but I cannot say when he will return. I am sorry to hear that war has broken out between France and Prussia. I hope Belgium at least will not be disturbed.

Here everything is quiet. The Government is well disposed towards Catholics, though the Protestants are in strong force. Last winter an Austrian man-of-war was at anchor a long time in this harbour. The crew was composed of very good Catholics, whose conduct and example was most edifying. Since this, the greater portion of the people of the capital have left the Protestants, and have begun attending the Catholic church. The commander of the ship made a handsome present to the church.
Continue to pray for me, and live as good Christians.

Your affectionate son,

Jef.\textsuperscript{1} De Veuster, Missionary Priest.

The next letter we can give is to his sister Pauline, a nun at Uden in Holland.

\textbf{LETTER XV.}

\textit{V.C.J.S.} Kohala, Hawaii, July 14, 1872.

My dear sister Pauline,—Three years now, and not a line from you. Where are you then, my dear sister? Are you off to Heaven already? Not so fast, if you please. A little more time is wanted to win that crown. Take pity then on your poor brother, who by dint of being so long forgotten, will become a regular savage among savages. Well, I certainly love my savages, who will soon be more civilized than Europeans. They all here know how to read and write, and are quite well dressed on Sundays. I have in my own district, which contains three thousand souls, four chapels built of wood, very neat, where I say Mass in turn on Sundays. I endeavour to instruct my people as well as I can, especially the chief men, who take my place in my absence, hold meetings on Sundays, and preach. Visiting the sick is my chief daily task. We have to fight their doctors, who are generally nothing but

\textsuperscript{1} In later life Father Damien frequently signed himself Jef. De Veuster in writing to his family. Jef. is the Flemish abridgment for Joseph.
Work in Hawaii.

sorcerers. In cases of sickness idolatrous sacrifices are still in use. All diseases are attributed to mysterious causes. It is very hard to disabuse these poor people of such superstitious notions. Still, by dint of preaching and watching over them, especially when sick, I have hopes that a good many of my flock die in good dispositions. They are always glad to receive the last sacraments. Death carries off in these islands more in a year than are brought into life: so the native population is continually diminishing. At present there are about sixty thousand natives in our group of islands. Our mission goes on fairly well; we are twenty-five priests in all, with churches everywhere. We do our best to hold our own against the Protestants. Our Sisters beat them with their girls' school; but as regards the education of the boys they beat us. Our priestly duties occupy us too much for us to keep schools. There should be Brothers for that duty. A few months back we had two terrible hurricanes. The first, in the couple of hours that it lasted, smashed a hundred houses. The second lasted three days. My chapels stood it well: two in the neighbouring district were blown away. I play the carpenter when necessary, and have a good deal of work in painting and decorating my chapels. In general I have much bother and little consolation; and it is only by God's grace that I find my yoke sweet and my burden light. When I get a little unwell, I congratulate myself that the end is near: but I
am content with my lot, only let perseverance crown my work. Let us be in the hands of God as tools in the hands of a skilful workman. Whether in life or death, we belong to Jesus. Pray for me.

DAMIEN.

The following letter, which is undated, seems to have been the last which was written before his departure for Molokai:

LETTER XVI.

My dear Parents,—It is now more than two years since I received any news of you, either from yourselves or my brothers. Pauline and Auguste have however written to me lately. . . .

May God's will be done! We must all die some time: let us live like Christians, that we may be united to God for ever in Heaven. [He then refers to the brilliant success of Pamphile's examinations.] What an honour for you to have so learned a son! As for me, my dear parents, I am quite well, and very happy in the office which the Lord has entrusted to me. My duties will be somewhat lighter now than in past years, as a priest has come to help me, and labour with me in my immense parish, which extends over twenty leagues. In the four years I have been here I have built four new churches and repaired one old one. I myself had to do the work of a carpenter. I have still one or two chapels to
build in my parish, and then we can live more comfortably.

Last year I succeeded in bringing into the right path about sixty heathens, to whom I administered Baptism. . . . Last year we had some very violent earthquakes here, caused by the gaseous vapours from the volcano. More than thirty men were killed by the eruption of the volcano, and about forty by a great wave which broke on the land with such force that no one had time to escape. An entire village, with a newly-built stone church, was destroyed by the inundation. The roof of two other stone churches fell in in consequence of the earthquake.

Leprosy is beginning to be very prevalent here. There are many men covered with it. It does not cause death at once, but it is very rarely cured. The disease is very dangerous, because it is highly contagious. The population of our islands consists of some sixty-two thousand at present. It was larger formerly. There are in all twenty-one priests in different parts of the islands. The island where I am is larger than all the others together. Here there are seven priests, who serve about twenty churches, and, I think, about one-third of the population are Christians, and the rest are either Protestants or Pagans.

Do not forget, my dear parents, to pray for me every day, there are so many dangers here both for one's soul and one's body.

Your affectionate son,

JEF. DE VEUSTER.
While engaged in the work that fell to his lot, he had ample opportunity for noticing the ravages that leprosy, the bane of the islands, was making amidst their inhabitants. His heart had often been touched at the sad sights he saw around him, and he longed to be able to do something to alleviate the sufferings of the victims of its cruel rage.

It is more than half a century ago that leprosy was introduced into the islands. How it got there remains still a mystery. Various theories have been held respecting it, but it is generally thought that it was brought over from Asia by some ill-fated foreigner. Once planted among the unfortunate islanders, its seeds were scattered far and wide, and in a very short time leprosy had gained great ground. The peculiar character of the Hawaiians helped greatly in the spreading of the pestilence. Sociable to the utmost degree, all they have is yours; you have but to enter their house, even as a stranger, and you are henceforth their bosom friend. They live in the closest intimacy, and their hospitality is generous to a fault. At the first approach of leprosy much might have been done to prevent its contagion, but the natives, having no fear of its slow growth, continued still to take no precautions. Their affectionate sociability led them to eat from the same dish, sleep on the same mat, and even smoke from the same pipe. They did not take the most ordinary precautions, and sick and sound alike would share their clothes one with another. What wonder then that the pesti-
lence got such a hold upon them. In 1865 the Hawaiian Government thought it high time to take some step towards isolating the infected; so, though rather late, an Act was passed, which made the north coast of Molokai the future home of all those tainted with the disease.

The law once passed, the difficulty now was to put it into execution. The lepers were scattered over the islands, and their friends clung to them with a tenacity that was truly painful to behold. They hid them in their homes and even in the depths of the wood, and thus the law was not speedily put in force. But nevertheless, many were taken to the leper island.

With the advent of a new King in 1873, the Government showed new zeal, and every means was taken to separate the infected persons from the community. No exemption was made, even for the persons of the highest rank, and the Queen's own cousin was conveyed to the leper island. The law was rigorous, and in spite of all remonstrance, and in spite of sympathetic tears, it was determined to root every trace of leprosy from the other islands and transfer it all to Molokai.

Such was the state of affairs that came under Father Damien's personal observation, and his heart burnt with pity for the poor banished lepers. The constant pitiable scenes of misery that he witnessed at the ports of embarkation, where the wallings and tears of the emigrant lepers were of daily occurrence, so moved him that he resolved he would take the first oppor-
tunity that presented itself of lightening their sad fate.

In the course of the year 1873 the long desired occasion offered itself. At a meeting that was held to celebrate the dedication of a chapel just completed by a Father Leonard at Wailuku in the Island of Maui, Father Damien chanced to be present, together with the Bishop, Mgr. Maigret, and others of his clergy. Among them were present some young priests of the Congregation, who had just arrived from Europe to supply the increasing needs of the mission. During the conversation Mgr. Maigret expressed his sorrow that owing to the scarcity of missioners he was unable to do anything for the poor lepers of Molokai, and especially did he regret that he was unable to provide them with a fixed pastor. Already his lordship had from time to time sent one of the missionaires to confess and administer the sacraments to the dying; but this only happened rarely, and there was no guarantee of its being continued. Hearing the Bishop's lament, Father Damien took in the situation at a glance, and eagerly offered himself to supply the long-felt necessity. “Monseigneur,” said he, “here are your new missioners; one of them could take my district, and if you will be kind enough to allow it, I will go to Molokai and labour for the poor lepers, whose wretched state of bodily and spiritual misfortune has often made my heart bleed within me.” This generous offer was gladly accepted, and that very day, without
even saying good-bye to his friends, he embarked with the Bishop on a vessel that had called at the harbour of Maui with a consignment of fifty lepers for Molokai. On their arrival, after consoling them, the venerable Bishop addressed the assembled lepers in a simple and touching manner. "So far, my children," said he in a voice that shook with emotion, "you have been left alone and uncared for. But you shall be so no longer. Behold, I have brought you one who will be a father to you, and who loves you so much that for your welfare and for the sake of your immortal souls, he does not hesitate to become one of you, to live and die with you."

Such was the step which this brave hero of charity took, without a thought of himself and without the least motive of human considerations to prompt him. Such is the action which has astonished the wisdom of the world, and gained its admiration and applause.

The Bishop returned to Honolulu, and Father Damien was left behind, without a house, without a friend, and, owing to his hasty departure, without even a change of linen.

Once on the island, he resolved with the determination of a man who, having made up his mind, will let no difficulty stand in his way, that come what might, now that he had attained the fondest desire of his heart, he would never abandon his poor lepers, till the foul disease should strike him too with its sure but certain hand, and bear him away from them to his last and Heavenly home.
CHAPTER IV.

Molokai: the Leper Colony (1873–1884).

Now began for the holy missionary a new work for God, a new kind of existence. It was in the year 1873 that Molokai first saw its Apostle, who was to shed so bright a ray of hope and comfort upon the scenes of misery to which it had long been a witness. Henceforth this island was to be the only scene of his labours, until God pleased to call him to Himself.

Of the twelve Hawaiian islands, Molokai is one of the smallest, being some thirty or forty miles by seven in extent. The soil of the island ascends from south to north in a gradual rise, which ends abruptly in a precipitous and all but vertical cliff projecting into the sea on both sides. At the foot of this cliff lies a low peninsula of some 6,000 acres, running out on the north side into the sea, and consequently cut off from all land communication with the rest of the island by the natural barrier of the cliffs. It is on this isolated peninsula, whose surface is covered with a grassy plain, that the two leper villages of Kalawao and Kalaupapa are established; the former lying close under the shadow of the precipice, while the latter and larger is situated on the northern shore. To
this spot the Hawaiian Government, in 1865, banished the lepers scattered through the kingdom, in order to prevent the further spreading of this terrible malady. Here they were doomed to live while life should last; here they were doomed to die. This feeling of complete despair naturally had the very worst effect on their moral state. With scarcely anything they could call a home, almost destitute of clothing and scarcely able to obtain the bare necessaries of life, all crushed down by the weight of their loathsome disease, they in many cases gave themselves up to all the depravity that can be found among those whom poverty has reduced to the lowest depths of misery and squalor. In their wretched huts of grass they passed their days, drinking a vile alcohol of their own distilling; without decent employment, without government of any kind, and what was worse, without religion. Nor could we expect them to escape the consequences of such an existence as this. Every kind of vice and lawlessness was rampant in this land of disease and sin; and in this condition they lived, until the turn for each one came to die.

And this was the field of labour to which Father Damien had been called. This was the state of the place when he first began his work of regeneration, sixteen years ago. As soon as he set his foot upon the island he exclaimed: "This is your life's work, Joseph!" and without delay he set about it in right good earnest. He was
now about thirty-three years old. A thick-set and strongly-built man, he was physically most eminently fitted for his self-imposed labour. The buoyancy of youth was in his step and the flush of health in his cheek. Father Damien scarcely knew what it was to be ill. But it was indeed high time for him to begin his work. Aggravated by the misery in which they lived, the leprosy was increasing in violence every day. As many as eight or twelve were dying every week; many from want of care and medical assistance, for at this time Molokai never saw the face of a doctor, and the only help they got from without was the utterly inadequate supply of clothing which was sent by the Hawaiian Government every year.

He commenced his wonderful work of charity by at once endeavouring to improve the condition of his unhappy flock and to alleviate in some measure their many and great miseries. He never thought of himself or his own convenience. All his sympathies were for those whom he had come to help. During the commencement of his apostolate his only roof was the shelter which the branch of a tree afforded him. He had no time to build himself a hut, for all was given to his suffering fellow-creatures; and even if he had had the time, he would have looked in vain for the material. And so, regardless of the wind and rain to which he was exposed, he slept in the open air, that is, when he slept at all. For the most part he was engaged in comforting and
soothing and encouraging those whom want and misery had driven to the verge of desperation. To bring back these poor wandering souls to some sort of appreciation of the goodness of God and the beauty of religion, was indeed a hard, up-hill, weary task. Their sensibilities had been blunted by their sufferings, and their hearts much hardened. But nothing could resist the bright influence of the holy priest. His cheerful bearing brought comfort where misery was before, while his charity and goodness could not fail to awake a corresponding chord in the hearts of those who listened to his kind voice and saw his bright smile.

The following extracts from a report of Father Damien's to the Hawaiian authorities appeared in an article by Mr. Edward Clifford in the Nineteenth Century:

"By special providence of our Divine Lord, who during His public life showed a particular sympathy for lepers, my way was traced towards Kalawao in May, 1873. I was then thirty-three years of age, enjoying a robust good health.

"About eighty of the lepers were in the hospital; the others, with a very few Kokuas (helpers), had taken their abode further up towards the valley. They had cut down the old pandanus or punhala groves to build their houses, though a great many had nothing but branches of castor-oil trees with which to construct their small shelters. These frail frames were covered with ki leaves or with sugar-cane leaves, the best ones with pili grass."
I myself was sheltered during several weeks under the single pandanus tree which is preserved up to the present in the churchyard. Under such primitive roofs were living pell-mell, without distinction of age or sex, old or new cases, all more or less strangers one to another, these unfortunate outcasts of society. They passed their time with playing cards, hula (native dances), drinking fermented ki-root beer, home-made alcohol, and with the sequels of all this. Their clothes were far from being clean and decent, on account of the scarcity of water, which had to be brought at that time from a great distance. (The state of the sufferers was almost unbearable to a new-comer.) Many a time in fulfilling my priestly duty at their domiciles I have been compelled to run outside to breathe fresh air. To counteract the bad smell I made myself accustomed to the use of tobacco, whereupon the smell of the pipe preserved me somewhat from carrying in my clothes the noxious odour of the lepers. At that time the progress of the disease was fearful, and the rate of mortality very high. The miserable condition of the settlement gave it the name of a living graveyard, which name, I am happy to state, is to-day no longer applicable to our place.

"As there were so many dying, my priestly duty towards them often gave me the opportunity to visit them at their domiciles, and although my exhortations were especially addressed to the prostrated, often they would fall upon the ears of
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public sinners, who, little by little, became conscious of the consequences of their wicked lives, and began to reform, and thus, with the hope in a merciful Saviour, gave up their bad habits.

"Kindness to all, charity to the needy, a sympathizing hand to the sufferers and the dying, in conjunction with a solid religious instruction to my listeners, these have been my constant means to introduce moral habits among the lepers. I am happy to say that, assisted by the local administration, my labours here, which seemed to be almost in vain at the beginning, have, thanks to a kind Providence, been greatly crowned with success."

Difficulties, however, were not wanting to the good Father in his work of charity, and they came at times from unexpected quarters. After he had passed some weeks on the island and had alleviated the more pressing necessities of the poor lepers, he set out for Honolulu, the capital of the Sandwich Islands, as there was no priest nearer to whom he could go for confession. He naturally called on the President of the Board of Health, who seemed surprised, and received him with cold politeness. On the Father asking leave to return to Molokai, he curtly informed him he might return indeed, but in that case he must remain for good. The Father explained the necessity he was under of occasionally visiting his Bishop, and pleaded the privilege of physicians and priests. But the Board of Health, in their zeal for isolation, absolutely refused permission.
He returned to Molokai, and shortly afterwards received an official notice, informing him that if he attempted to leave, or even visit any other portion of the island, he would be put under immediate arrest. Father Damien cared little about his own convenience, but where God was concerned and the comfort of his beloved lepers, the aspect of things was changed. With characteristic firmness and frankness he replied, "I shall come. You must not prevent me from visiting my Bishop." Some little time later, Mgr. Maigret, his Bishop, while making his visitation of the several islands, wished the captain of the steamer to put him ashore at the Léproserie of Molokai. The captain absolutely refused, saying it was forbidden by the Government. The Bishop, however, prevailed on him to lie off the shore for a time, and to allow him to signal to Father Damien. In consequence of these signals, a boat came off bringing the Father, and rowed by lepers. The boat was ordered to keep at a certain distance, and from there the Father made his confession to the Bishop in French, and received sacramental absolution. Not long after, however, other counsels prevailed, and he received a permit to come and go as he pleased. Nay, so much did their ideas change, that later on whenever he visited Honolulu he was invited to dine at the royal table and lodge in the palace. However, instead of using the grand bed which was prepared for him, he used to sleep on the floor in a rug—"to prevent
infection," he said; but mortification had much more to do with it. In fact one of his fellow-missioners told his brother Pamphile that Father Damien always slept on a plank-bed, thus continuing the austerity which we have seen he began at home.

We insert here, from the Annales de Picpus, his first letter from Molokai.

LETTER XVII.

Molokai, November 25, 1873.

My dear Brother,—God has deigned to choose your unworthy brother to assist the poor people attacked by that terrible malady, so often mentioned in the Gospel, leprosy. For the last ten years this plague has been spreading in the islands, and at last the Government felt itself obliged to isolate those affected with it. Shut up in a corner of the island of Molokai, between inaccessible cliffs and the sea, these unfortunate creatures are condemned to perpetual exile. Out of two thousand in all, who have been sent here, some eight hundred are still living, and among them a certain number of Catholics. A priest was wanted; but here was a difficulty. For, as all communication was forbidden with the rest of the islands, a priest who should be placed here must consider himself shut up with the lepers for the rest of his life; and Mgr. Maigret, our Vicar-Apostolic, declared that he would not impose this sacrifice on any of us. So, remembering that on the day of my profession I had
already put myself under the funeral pall, I offered myself to his lordship to meet, if he thought it well, this second death. Consequently, on the 11th of last May, a steamer landed me here, together with a batch of fifty lepers, whom the authorities had collected in the island of Hawaii.

I found on my arrival a little chapel dedicated to St. Philomena, but that was all. No house to shelter me. I lived a long time under the shelter of a tree, not wishing to sleep under the same roof as the lepers. Later on, the whites of Honolulu having assisted me with their subscriptions, I was able to build myself a hut, sixteen feet long and ten wide, where I am now writing these lines. Well, I have been here six months, surrounded by lepers, and I have not caught the infection: I consider this shows the special protection of our good God, and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Leprosy, as far as is known, is incurable: it seems to begin by a corruption of the blood. Discoloured patches appear on the skin, especially on the cheeks; and the parts affected lose their feeling. After a time, this discoloration covers the whole body; then ulcers begin to open, chiefly at the extremities. The flesh is eaten away, and gives out a fetid odour; even the breath of the leper becomes so foul that the air around is poisoned with it. I have had great difficulty in getting accustomed to such an atmosphere. One day, at the Sunday Mass, I found
myself so stiffed that I thought I must leave the altar to breathe a little of the outer air, but I restrained myself, thinking of our Lord when He commanded them to open the grave of Lazarus, notwithstanding Martha's words, jam focet. Now my sense of smell does not cause me so much inconvenience, and I enter the huts of the lepers without difficulty. Sometimes, indeed, I still feel some repugnance when I have to hear the confessions of those near their end, whose wounds are full of maggots. Often, also, I scarce know how to administer Extreme Unction, when both hands and feet are nothing but raw wounds.

This may give you some idea of my daily work. Picture to yourself a collection of huts with eight hundred lepers. No doctor: in fact, as there is no cure, there seems no place for a doctor's skill. A white man who is a leper, and your humble servant, do all the doctoring work.

Every morning then after my Mass, which is always followed by an instruction, I go to visit the sick, half of whom are Catholics. On entering each hut, I begin by offering to hear their confession. Those who refuse this spiritual help, are not therefore refused temporal assistance, which is given to all without distinction. Consequently every one, with the exception of a very few bigoted heretics, look on me as a father. As for me, I make myself a leper with the lepers, to gain all to Jesus Christ. That is why in...
preaching, I say, *We lepers*, not, *My brethren*, as in Europe. You may judge by the following fact what a power the missioner has. Last Saturday some of the younger people, discontented with their lot, and thinking themselves ill-treated by the Government, determined on an attempt at revolt. All, except two, were Calvinists or Mormons. Well, I only had to present myself and say a word or two, and all the heads were bowed, and all was over!

I have baptized more than a hundred persons since my arrival. A good part of these have died with the white robe of baptismal grace. I have buried also a large number. The average of deaths is about one every day. Many are so destitute that there is nothing to defray their burial expenses. They are simply wrapt in a blanket. As far as my duties allow me time, I make coffins myself for these people.

Don't send me any more intentions for Masses. I have more than I can manage. It is well known that we do everything *gratis*. But our good Master knows how to repay us. Or rather He has already repaid us. If our Lord were to ask me: *Quando misi vos sine sacculo et pera et calceamentis, numquid aliquid defuit vobis?*— "When I sent you without purse, or scrip, or shoes, was anything wanting to you?" I should certainly have to reply, *Nihil, Domine*. In fact, after leaving all I had at Kohala for Father Fabian, I came here without anything. I have not a penny of income, yet *nihil mihi deest*, I want for
nothing. I have even alms to give away. How is this to be explained? That is His secret, Who promised to give a hundred-fold to those who gave up all for Him.

I have just built another chapel, two miles from this, at the other end of our settlement. This chapel cost me 1,500 francs, without counting my work as carpenter, and I am only 25 francs in debt. St. Joseph is my procurator. Our Sisters of Honolulu send me clothes, and some charitable souls do the rest.

A few months back, the Minister of the Interior (Home Secretary) forbade me to set foot outside the leper settlement. I was then a State prisoner. To-day, a despatch of the French Consul announces my liberty. Blessed be God! I can now not only take care of my lepers, but labour also for the conversion of the rest of the island, in which there is not yet any other priest. I ought to have a companion, but where can I get one? Pray and get prayers that the Lord may bless my mission.

Your brother in the Sacred Hearts,

Damien.

In the following January, Father Andrew Burgermann was appointed to take charge of the rest of the island of Molokai, Father Damien being left in charge of the lepers. The latter, however, who was certainly all to all, being a skilful carpenter and master-builder, had to leave the leper settlement to the charge of Father
Andrew for a few months, while he built for the new missioner a chapel in the southern part of the island. He then returned to his lepers, and Father Andrew took possession of the southern station. It was about this time, when the law of absolute exclusion was a little relaxed, that the Government had a bridle-path made from the top of the precipitous cliff above described to the leper settlement below, whereby a sort of land communication was established. The path was very steep and difficult, cut in zig-zag on the face of the cliff, and there was no chance of the lepers having strength enough to climb it, since it took able-bodied men an hour and a half to surmount it.

The next letter was written to his brother Pamphile in the second year of his residence among the lepers at Kalawao.

LETTER XVIII.

Molokai, December, 8, 1874.

... Surrounded as I am from morning till night by my poor lepers, I wish I could multiply myself to alleviate their wretchedness. The alms sent me by some charitable persons, and the help afforded by the superiors of the mission, enable me to procure many little comforts for my sick, which the Government is not always able to furnish. The annual sum which the Hawaiian Legislature votes for this settlement is mainly spent in obtaining the necessary provisions. Each person receives a weekly portion, in meat
and *taro,* so that they do not suffer from hunger. They receive also the wherewith to buy clothes. They have suffered a great disaster lately, when a terrible wind-storm carried away the roofing of half the huts. In consequence a great number of the poor people have no shelter against the wind and rain. Now, a leper is very sensitive to cold and damp. Winter, which consists here of rainy weather, is the time of the most numerous deaths. I have just buried one of my best Christians, the son of one who suffered persecution for the faith. His death was extremely edifying. Longing for Heaven, he was constantly repeating the words of St. Paul: "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ." When I came with the Holy Viaticum to his bed-side, his faith and his love shone forth unmistakably on his countenance. He is buried under the shadow of the great cross I have erected in the middle of our new cemetery. With him lie nearly two hundred other lepers, who have died Catholics this last year and a half. In spite of this large number of deaths, my double parish grows larger, not only by the conversion of heretics and infidels, but also by the arrival, from time to time, of fresh lepers already Catholics. Including the catechumens, whom I hope to baptize this Christmas, I shall have had over one hundred baptisms this year in the settlement. Father Andrew (Burgermann) supplied for me here during four months. During that time he had forty baptisms. I was

¹ The potato-like tubers of *Caladium esculentum.*
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employed these four months in building a church for him in the other part of the island, away from the leper colony. There also there has been a good number of baptisms on occasion of the blessing of that church. Next year I expect to build two more churches; then this island will be divided into different stations like the rest of our archipelago.

Here is a little adventure which has just happened to me. This evening, at eight o'clock, I was summoned to a dying woman. The night being very dark, the road muddy, and the rain falling in spouts, I was obliged to take my horse. Alighting at my destination, I tethered my horse carefully before entering the place. There I found a number of Catholic women, all lepers. The dying woman, who had before apostatized, made a good confession and received Extreme Unction, while the company prayed aloud. On leaving the place, there was no horse to be seen; he had snapped the cord and was off, carrying with him my good cloak which I had strapped over the saddle, and which should have defended me from the wet. It was no use to hunt for him. I could not see at the distance of two paces. So I had to tramp as I was, over stones and ruts, through mud and rain, to my hut. Well, here I am again safe and sound, regretting indeed the probable loss of my cloak, but full of joy at having helped to save a soul. May the good Jesus be praised!

Joseph.
The same night he wrote a letter to his mother, stealing the time from his sleep, as he tells her.

LETTER XIX.

Molokai, December 8, 1874.

My dear Mother, Brothers, and Sisters,—As I told you last year, I am living here in a village consisting entirely of lepers. Though this disease is contagious, I am still enjoying perfect health, and am very happy in the midst of these unfortunate people. I do all I can to lead them along the paths of virtue, and to prepare them for a holy death. I have the charge of two churches, and I have baptized this year a hundred lepers, and have buried quite as many.

During the summer, I went to another part of this island, where I remained four months in the character of carpenter, putting up a new church, 44 feet long, 22 wide; with 10 Gothic windows, and a tower 50 feet high. It cost more than 5,000 francs. It is there the new missioner is stationed. I am not ashamed to act as mason or carpenter, when it is for the glory of God. These ten years I have been on the Mission, I have built a church or chapel every year. The habit I had at home of practising different kinds of work, is of immense use to me here. However, in my leper settlement I have not much time for manual labour: my priestly duties are very numerous.

A few words now about my way of living. I live all alone in a little hut: lepers never enter it.
In the morning, after Mass, a woman who is not a leper comes to prepare my meal. My dinner consists of rice, meat, coffee, and a few biscuits. For supper, I take what was left at dinner, with a cup of tea, the water for which I boil over a lamp. My poultry-yard furnishes me with eggs. I only make two meals a day, morning and evening. I rarely take anything between. You see I live very well; I don’t starve. I am not much at home in the day-time. After dark, I say my Breviary by the light of my lamp, I study a bit, or write a letter. So don’t wonder at getting only one letter a year from me. I really have not the time even to think of you, except in my prayers. I have been obliged to steal an hour or two from my sleep now, in order to write this letter and some others which I must send to Europe.

The new year is at hand: I wish you all a very happy one. Don’t forget me in your daily prayers.

Joseph Damien De Veuster.

One of the first objects to which Father Damien turned his attention was the water supply. This had hitherto been exceedingly bad, and had greatly increased the sufferings of the poor people. To say nothing of the filth and dirt, which of itself had helped to make their existence more wretched, the scarcity was such as to leave them at times destitute of what was absolutely necessary. He forthwith set to work and prevailed upon the Government to second his efforts. In a short time water from a never-failing supply was brought
down from a distance, both in abundance and of excellent purity.

Having remedied this evil, he then set about the removing of another. The dwellings of the lepers had hitherto been of a most miserable description. They consisted of small huts, built on the ground; and such a word as house could never apply to them. The cabins were bad in themselves, squalid and filthy; but they were rendered worse by the habits of those who lived in them. They had no separate abodes, but were all huddled together indiscriminately; and it was to these vile, fetid dens that Father Damien had, at the beginning of his work, borne his message of charity. It was here he calmed the closing hours of those whose end was drawing near. It was from places of this description that he oftentimes bore out in his own arms the corpses of those whose sufferings had been ended by death.

To remedy this was now his principal aim, and it was not long before he accomplished his purpose. The Father seems to have had a knack of inspiring others with something of the fire of zeal and energy which burnt in his own bosom. Through his representations, a supply of material was shipped to the island and dealt out to the inhabitants by the Government, by means of which healthy wooden cottages, built on trestles to raise them above the ground, took the place of the former miserable hovels, with their grass-thatched roofs. This work, which was begun in 1874, was
not completed at once: but we can obtain some idea of Father Damien's energy, when we learn that by 1886 no less than three hundred cottages, large and small, had been erected mainly by himself and the lepers, from timber furnished partly by the Government of Honolulu, partly by private benevolence. Both leper villages, Kalawao and Kalaupapa, consist of these wooden cottages, painted or whitewashed on the exterior. Nothing better could have been done to lessen the sufferings of these unfortunates, for it stayed the rapid progress of the disease, and as a natural result, reduced, in no small degree, the death-rate on the island.

Father Damien's next move regarded the supply of food. Although the condition of the lepers in this respect had improved, it was nevertheless lamentable. The Government had started on a theory, that if they provided them with a few horses, heifers, carts, &c., the lepers would in a short time form a self-supporting colony, and strange though it may seem, it was some time before they discovered their error. Then came a tardy reformation in the way of a scanty supply of food and clothing, but it was not until Father Damien's arrival that any material improvement was visible. Through his intervention a regular supply was secured; and soon after it was increased in quantity. In 1878, a committee visited the island to inquire into the commissariarit, and through the Father's representations some slight improvements were made. Yet, in spite
of this, when the Princess Regent and her daughter visited the place in 1884, there was still much to be done; and as late as 1886 we find Father Damien renewing, or perhaps we should say continuing, his efforts, in a letter of complaint to the "Board of Health," in which he states that not one-tenth of those outside the hospital had tasted milk for several years. Yet this is a strong proof how universally things had improved since the Father's advent, for we now hear him seeking, not for necessaries, but for some comforts and little luxuries for his poor lepers.

There was another thing of which the lepers were sadly in want on Father Damien's arrival. Clothing was miserably deficient. Some, it is true, were supplied by their friends, but the friends could not afford all that was needed. Father Damien could not work reform by magic, but after his arrival improvement in this respect soon began. He erected a store for the sale of clothing, and in place of a yearly grant of garments, six dollars a year were allowed to each leper. This was an improvement, but in 1886 we find the energetic Father declaring the allowance still too small, and applying for assistance.

But the catalogue of the numerous external labours for the temporal comforts of the inmates of Molokai is not yet completed. It is true there was a hospital, but the name was a mockery: it was a hospital without doctors, or sisters, or nurses. Father Damien was not satisfied till
there was a resident doctor, a dispensary, and all necessaries for alleviating the disease which they could not cure, and above all, excellently arranged hospitals for the most extreme cases. Yet so well do the lepers remember the old mockery in Kalawao, that they dread the name of hospital. And no wonder! For in former days the same conveyance that bore the patient to the hospital, brought his coffin also.

And thus it was, by attending to the corporal necessities of those he had come to help, that Father Damien found his way to the hearts of the poor neglected lepers. For they on their side, naturally amiable, generous, and light-hearted, rendered this task an easier one than might have been expected. It would have been strange indeed, under these circumstances, if such disinterested and heroic charity had failed to have its full effect. The very fact that a man was found to come and live there, voluntarily, for their sakes, was in itself sufficient to touch the heart of even the most reckless and abandoned.

Let us now consider Father Damien's labours in what was more directly their spiritual welfare. After attending to their corporal necessities as a preliminary step, he then threw himself heart and soul into the work of regeneration. This was the object of his sacrifice—the salvation of their souls.

When he first arrived at the settlement, he found a small chapel at Kalawao, but he was not
satisfied until he had built a second at Kalaupapa, in order that all his flock, even the feeblest, might find a church within reach. Before very long, however, the numbers of the lepers so greatly increased, and the effect of the Father’s work amongst them became so manifest in the ever-increasing number of Catholics, as to render it necessary to make some other provision. Under these circumstances, with the aid of the lepers, he built a church at Kalawao, of which the first chapel formed a transept. He afterwards painted it without and decorated it within in accordance with the Hawaiian taste, and here he gave most of his instructions. He also built an orphanage. It consists of two buildings, one for the boys, the other for the girls, and is situated close to Father Damien’s own house. Forty orphan children were under his immediate direction. Here they are instructed in such useful arts and duties as they are able to perform, the girls devoting themselves to needlework and other similar useful employments. Nor was anything left undone in regard to the instruction of the leper children in general, living with their parents in the settlement. At first his instructions were given in the open air, as chance might offer. But before long he managed to erect a school, and in 1880 another had to be built to accommodate the increasing number of pupils.

Another of the Father’s good works was to provide for the decent interment of the dead. As the Government did not supply money to
buy coffins, the price of which was two dollars a piece, those who died penniless were often buried without them. In order to prevent this in future the Father formed a "coffin association" among the lepers, and also made a large well-inclosed cemetery, adjoining one of his churches. Before 1879, sixteen hundred lepers had been buried under his ministration, and he often had to act as undertaker and grave-digger as well as pastor. In a letter to his brother, Père Pamphile, he says, "I am grave-digger and carpenter. If time allows I make the coffins, otherwise I bury them in their clothes."

The Father's day was spent in looking after the different institutions he had founded, and in all the other duties of his toilsome ministry. It began with a very early Mass, at which those of the lepers who were not too feeble assisted; and this was the Father's support for the day's hard work. Then followed the arduous duties of the day. Besides visiting his orphanage and schools, there were the sacraments to administer to endless sick, calls to be made, and the hospitals to visit. There were children to be baptized and marriages to be solemnized; for the lepers marry and give in marriage. It was indeed a strange sight to see the bridal pair united in the midst of festivity and rejoicing, probably with only three or four more years to live. Then on fixed days there were confessions to hear, besides ceaseless summonses to bring the last sacraments to those who were going to be freed from their
life of pain: dying now, not in despair, as was oftentimes the case before the Father came, but in calm and perfect peace.

But Father Damien's time was mostly spent in the hospitals. In addition to the work of his ministry which so often called him there, Father Damien had fixed days for what we may call official visits, in order to see that the sufferers had everything that was in their power to give them. And it was in this work that his heroism is brought more forcibly before us. The inmates were tended by friends who were as yet not much crippled by the ravages of the disease. The hospital formed two sides of a square, and in this latter the patients could enjoy the fresh air and sunshine. Father Damien's visit brought a two-fold comfort. He cared for their bodies as well as their souls; he would himself feed them, putting the food in their mouths when the terrible malady had deprived them of their hands, and bring little sweetmeats and delicacies, which, as he says in a letter to his brother, he "received in great abundance, especially from the Sisters of Honolulu." These last had charge of the hospital there, to which doubtful cases of leprosy were sent, before dooming them to perpetual banishment.

Father Damien in his own hospitals at Molokai had ever a word of consolation to speak or a confession to hear; now he was at the bedside of the dying, administering the last rites of the Church. There they lay in the last stage of that horrible disease, unable to take food or drink,
almost without drawing breath, curled up in a heap of corruption, equal to, if not surpassing, that of the grave. Listen to this description of a leprous child from the pen of an eye-witness: "A corner of the blanket was raised cautiously; a breathing object lay beneath; a face, a human face turned slowly towards us; a face on which scarcely a trace of humanity remained! The dark skin was puffed up and blackened, a kind of moss, gummy and glistening, covered it; the muscles of the mouth had contracted and laid bare the grinning teeth; the thickened tongue lay like a fig between them; the eye-lids curled tightly back, exposing the inner surface and the protruding eye-balls, now shapeless and broken, looked not unlike burst grapes." And these were the objects of Father Damien's charity. It was in the care of cases such as this that the last sixteen years of his life were spent. But let us pass on to more cheerful and pleasant sights.

On Sundays and festivals Father Damien sang Mass at Kalawao, after which he hastened off to Kalaupapa, there again to offer the Holy Sacrifice. There he stayed till after Vespers and Benediction, when he was obliged to return to Kalawao, to perform the same services. Everything connected with his church was perfect in its way. The sanctuary boys, though in many cases disfigured with disease, looked clean and neat in their plain white cottas. The altar vessels of richly wrought gold were given to Father Damien

1 Stoddart, The Lepers of Molokai, p. 70.
by the Superior of St. Roch in Paris. With simple devotion the lepers sang short refrains as the service proceeded. Father Damien, speaking of this himself, says: "My lepers are very fervent. They fill the churches from morning till night, and pour forth their prayers to God with an ardour that would make some religious blush." And these were the people of whom it was previously said, "They had no law." It might have been added that they had also little religion worth the name; for though in the other islands idolatry had been abolished, here in Molokai, till Father Damien came, paganism with all its horrors was still alive. Under him it became a peaceful, law-abiding community, with a happy cheerfulness that nothing on earth could destroy.

We must now return to the letters, no doubt to the satisfaction of our readers. In his letters, the man himself whom we admire is speaking; and it is far more interesting to listen to him than to some one else speaking about him. The following letter is almost entirely taken up with family matters, and helps to show that the most absolute sacrifice of self for God co-existed with the most intense natural affection for the members of his family. Yet this affection does not prevent him from scolding them for wounding his humility by the publication of his letters.

LETTER XX.

Kalawao, Molokai, March 15, 1876.

My very dear Mother and Brothers,—Excuse my not having answered your letters of May
10th at once. The reason was, I was expecting every day, although in vain, to hear from Père Pamphile, and besides I was a little annoyed at seeing my last letter printed in the Annales. Once for all, let me tell you I do not like that done. I want to be unknown to the world, and now I find, in consequence of the few letters I have written, that I am being talked about on all sides, even in America.

How are you now, my dear mother? Are you able to walk to church without a stick? I hear that you are burdened with the care of children again. Poor children, to be so early deprived of a mother’s care; happily, your grandmother is still at hand to take charge of you.

You have had a great trial, my dear Gérard. Dorothea’s loss must have been a sore grief to you. But what would you have? Almighty God intends to teach you not to attach yourselves to the things of this world. Let us remember that it is a place of exile, and that those who die in the Lord are far happier than you or I who are left here below. Sometimes I am inclined to envy my poor sick Christians, when I administer the last sacraments to them and bury them.

I am quite satisfied with the arrangements you made with father before his death concerning the farm. I hope everything is going on well. You mentioned something about doing business with the traders out here, but you must not take that idea into your head. You know I could do absolutely nothing in the matter, and who then is to
look after your interests? Besides, coffee is very

dear out here, one franc twenty centimes the

pound; then there is the expense of freight, and

of duty, not to speak of the danger of a long

voyage of one hundred or two hundred days by

sea. You would only run a risk of ruining your-

self. You had better follow contentedly in our
dear father's footsteps, and, above all, be a good

Christian, for what would it profit you to become

rich here and be lost for ever hereafter? But

as you have Father Pamphile near you (I am told

he is a very successful missioner in Belgium), there

is no need for me to preach to you. Let us all

strive to serve God as well as we can, each accord- 

ing to his vocation.

And now, dear Léonce, how is the old man of

Kruis? It cannot be true that you have grown 

grey, you who are not yet fifty years old. I do

not wonder that your beard is long. I wear one

of nearly six months' growth, but it is not grey 

yet. I was delighted to hear that your son John

had made up his mind to go on the foreign mis-
sions. May God bless his good resolution, and do

you put no obstacle in his way. It is a pity that

he is the only son you have living. Four already

gone to Heaven! I trust they were baptized. If

so, how rich you are, my dear brother, and your

wife, in possessing so many little angels. En-
deavour always to walk in the straight path, and

lead your children in it, so that we may all one


1 Kruis is the name of the hamlet where his brother Léonce 
lived.
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1 Kruis is the name of the hamlet where his brother Léonce lived.
day meet in Heaven. As for me, I still am leading the same life in my leper colony. I have not left it since last July. For six months I have not seen the sun rise or set, so entirely are we shut in by high mountains. In spite of all, I am very happy and very well; in fact, I feel stronger than I ever did before. In my leisure time I cultivate a little piece of ground, to provide food for my chickens, who in their turn provide me with food in the shape of eggs.

I often say Mass for all members of my family, that God may vouchsafe to bless them, both the living and the dead.

Farewell, dearest mother and brothers. Kind remembrances to all my friends. Pray for me.

JEF. DE VEUSTER, Missioner.

The next letter, as we see from its contents, was written from Honolulu, whither he had gone on business for the other side of the island of Molokai.

LETTER XXI.

V.C.J.S. April, 1877.

My very dear Mother and Brothers,—At last I have received your long wished for letter, and the sight of my mother's handwriting, together with the good wishes of Gérard, fill me with joy. . . . Do not trouble yourself, my dear mother, about these temporal misfortunes. The more you detach yourself from the cares and good things of earth, the more you will feel that our dear Lord is the real treasure of the faithful. Turn all your
thoughts and aspirations to Heaven, and work
hard to secure for yourself a place there for ever.

Yesterday evening our good Bishop asked me,
“What age is your mother?” I said you were
born in 1804. “So then,” he replied, “she is
the same age as myself. Give her my kindest
regards.”

This excellent prelate, who retains his powers
wonderfully, is really a father to us. On our
arrival at Honolulu we were lodged in the palace,
and treated like members of the family.

I came here to prepare the necessary materials
for the building of two new chapels for Father
Andrew Burgermann, at Molokai. It is he who
during my absence discharges my duties among
the lepers.

During the winter I worked hard to enlarge my
church and build a pretty tower. Manual work
is very good for my health, and I feel well and
happy among my unfortunate sick people. These
now number over seven hundred, and the Govern-
ment is ever adding to the number, so that the
more we bury the more are sent to us. They are
here for the rest of their life. Very rarely indeed
is any one sent back. The disease is incurable,
and may last from ten to twenty years.

Yesterday I assisted at the burial of our Crown
Prince, the brother of the King. Many of our
Hawaiian princes die without being converted.
. . . Give my kindest regards to the clergy of
Tremeloo, to all my friends, and to all the family.
Oh, my dear mother and brothers, let us all live
as good Christians, with the hope of meeting one day in Heaven. Pray every day for
Your son and brother,
J. D. De Veuster.

LETTER XXII. (Translated from the Flemish).

Kalawao, Molokai, Sandwich Islands.
My very dear Mother, Brothers, and friends,—I am glad to hear that God has granted my humble prayers, and continues to bless you day by day. Keep a good heart, my own dear mother, in your old days; the older you become the greater should be your confidence in God. Turn all your desires towards an eternal crown, and do not be too anxious about temporal affairs. . . . Let each one of us, in his own state of life, strive to amass treasures that we can take with us to the next world. Do not wait to write until you have heard from me. You know well enough that often I have no time to write, and after all I have not much to tell that would interest you. . . . Excuse this short letter, it is difficult for me to write in Flemish. My health keeps very good. My work is just the same amongst my lepers. As fast as the old ones die off new ones arrive at the settlement, which thus keeps always full.

Your loving son,
Jef. De Veuster.

Towards the end, English was his language. Flemish he remembered only by the sound, for his spelling is all wrong; but he knew his mother would prefer him to write in language he had learnt at her knee.
We have heard him complaining of his good works being published. At that time he did not know that one consequence of this publicity would be a flow of alms for his use in relieving the lepers. Contributions came in from many parts, enabling him to do still more than before for his ill-fated clients. He was able also by the charity of the white residents at Honolulu, to build himself, in 1878, a more suitable dwelling than the hut we have already heard of. This was a small presbytery two storeys high, with an exterior stair-way leading to the upper verandah. He speaks of this in the next letter. He tells us also of an assistant priest coming to reside in the colony that same year, who was stationed at Kalaupapa, while he himself remained at Kalawao. From 1873 to 1878 he had worked single-handed, with only occasional assistance from another Father in giving a retreat to the lepers, or hearing their confessions at some great festival. His burden was now somewhat lightened. The first resident priest sent to his aid was Father André Nolander, who had studied medicine, and was therefore able to assist in more ways than one. Father Damien himself, however, tells us a little later, that he also had become, through his long experience, a bit of a doctor, and found himself able to treat with success any ordinary malady of the leper patients. The activity of his mind, and the enduring strength of his constitution, admirably seconded his consuming desire to relieve and comfort his people in every possible way.
LETTER XXIII.

Kalawao, Molokai, February, 1879.

Beloved Mother and dear Brothers,—I have long been waiting in vain for news from you; it seems as if you were all dead already, or had completely forgotten me. . . . As for me, I am in the habit of daily paying you a little visit in spirit. I fancy I see you, mother, Léonce, and Gérard, at the same work you used to be employed on twenty-five years ago.

My health is still good, thank God; my work also continues to be the same as ever. I nurse the sick, I instruct them, give them the sacraments, and bury the dead. As fast as some of the sick die, others are sent here, so there are always from seven hundred to eight hundred of them. Last year I built a good presbytery two storeys high. If any of my friends were to come to visit me I should lodge them in the top storey. I am not obliged to trouble myself much about provisions, for the Government is very good to me. I receive my weekly portion as well as the sick, and other necessaries are sent me from the mission. Lately another priest came here to help me (Father André Nolander), he understands medicine.

In the course of last year we administered Baptism to one hundred and ten converts, of whom several have already gone to Heaven. I very seldom leave this place, so I have no news to tell you. Let us place all our hope and
centre all our desires in Heaven, so as to prepare for ourselves a permanent home there by a Christian life here below. It is there we shall next meet. What has become of John and the other children?

Remember me to our relatives and friends. Your affectionate son and brother,

Damien J. De Veuster.

LETTER XXIV.

V.C.J.S.

Kalawao, Molokai, January 31, 1880.

My dear Brother,—Your kind letter of the 12th of November from Louvain reached me on the 2nd of January. I have now been nearly seven years among the lepers. During that long period I have had the opportunity of closely observing, and as it were touching with my hand, human misery under its most terrible aspect. Half the people are like living corpses, which the worms have already begun to devour, at first internally, afterwards externally, until the most loathsome wounds are formed, which very rarely heal.

The Hawaiian Government still continue to collect and send us fresh lepers as they come across them and as far as their means allow. The sixty-nine thousand piastres appropriated to the maintenance of the lepers for two years are not sufficient to defray the cost of getting together all that are to be found in the different islands. The number of lepers exiled to Molokai
is kept up to between seven and eight hundred. More cannot be taken for want of means.

Since I have been here I have buried from one hundred and ninety to two hundred every year, and still the number of living lepers is always over seven hundred. Last year death carried off an unusually large number of Christians. There are many empty places in the church, but in the cemetery there is hardly room left to dig the graves. I was quite vexed the other day to find they had begun to dig a grave just by the large cross, in the very spot which I had so long reserved for myself! I had to insist on the place being left vacant. The cemetery, church, and presbytery form one enclosure, thus at night-time I am the sole keeper of this garden of the dead, where my spiritual children lie at rest.

My greatest pleasure is to go there to say my beads, and meditate on that unending happiness which so many of them are already enjoying. There, too, my thoughts dwell on the sufferings of Purgatory. I confess to you, my dear brother, the cemetery and the hospital, where the dying lie, are my best meditation books, as well for the benefit of my own soul as in view of preparing my instructions.

I preach every morning after Mass, and on Sundays at High Mass my children sing beautifully, almost like finished musicians. But recently, in consequence of death and of chest-diseases, I have lost all the best voices in my choir. I shall have great difficulty in getting it up again. For
some years I have had a little orphanage for leper children, to whom a good widow, not a leper herself, somewhat elderly, acts as matron. Though the houses are at some distance from one another, the lepers have meals in common. Each receives seven pounds of beef every week, and twenty-one pounds of a vegetable which we call “taro,” which we consider very nourishing. Besides this we have planted a large field of sweet potatoes, which we keep in reserve in case the ordinary provisions should not reach us in time.

In the lepers’ quarters is a large shop where clothes and other things may be bought by those who are fortunate enough to have money. From time to time I receive large bundles of clothes for the poor, and for my numerous children. It is owing to the exertions of the kind Superioress of our Sisters at Honolulu that I am assisted by public charity. During the first years of my ministry here, I often received considerable alms through our Procurator in Paris, but not having played the part of a public beggar, the charity of our benefactors over the sea seems to have lost sight of the poor lepers of Molokai. Father André has been nineteen months in the new leper village of Kalaupapa, where the religious movement is still at work. During this time I have had to visit the rest of our island every month. We now have there one large church and four chapels. Two white men, who are Catholics, have sugar manufactories on the island, but it is not yet, however, pervaded by a Catholic spirit.
Returning yesterday evening after an absence of six days, I found one of my children dying. She begged me to bring her the Holy Viaticum without delay, and scarce had she finished her thanksgiving when she gave up her soul to the God Whom she had just received. Yesterday I made her coffin myself, and dug her grave. This morning after the Requiem Mass I was apprised of the death of two more members of my flock—so to-day I have three burials! Often I carry Holy Viaticum publicly to the dying, as is done in Catholic countries.

Our Government doctor is due here this evening; it is he who has charge of the hospital. Last year I received from Tonquin, through the kindness of M. Lesserhens, the director of the Seminary for Foreign Missions in Paris, a large quantity of pills specially intended for the treatment of leprosy. The doctor, Father André, and I administered them, and though as yet we have not succeeded in effecting any complete cure, still a marked improvement has been the result. It is the same specific that is mentioned in several articles in the *Catholic Missions*, written by Father Stephens of Trinidad, who has used it for a long time in the lepers' hospital there. It is called Hoàng-nán. We have two schools in the lepers' quarters, the masters of which are Catholics and paid by the Government. The majority of the leper children are Catholics. We meet with very little opposition on the part of Protestants, who do not trouble themselves much about lepers of
their creed. It is quite different in places I visited outside the lepers' quarters. I wish I could get a good priest for them, full of zeal and patience. What are our young countrymen thinking of, that they do not come forward with generous hearts to the field of battle, and fill the gaps in our ranks which death and old age have made?

Our mission is well established in the Sandwich Isles, but priests are needed. Now is indeed the time to pray the Lord of the harvest to send fresh labourers. Emigrants are arriving in numbers from China, from the Portuguese Islands, from Madeira, and the islands of the South Pacific to inhabit our islands, from which the aboriginal population is gradually disappearing. Believe me, dear brother,

Your devoted brother in the Sacred Hearts,

J. DAMIEN DE VEUSTER,
Missionary Priest.

In 1881 the Holy Father accorded the venerable Mgr. Maigret, Vicar Apostolic of the Sandwich Islands, a coadjutor in the person of Father Herman Koeckmann. The new prelate was very graciously received by the Princess Regent at Honolulu, and was charged by her to convey to Father Damien at Molokai the decoration of Knight Commander of the Order of Kalakaua, in recognition of the invaluable services he had rendered her Government and nation by devoting himself to the charge of the leper colony, and bringing it to such admirable order. She had
herself landed a few days before at Kalaupapa, and could herself judge of his success. We give an extract from a letter of the heroic missioner to his brother, Père Pamphile, describing the first visit of the Coadjutor to Molokai.

LETTER XXV.

Kalawao, December 8, 1881.

. . . Already, before his consecration, Mgr. Koeckmann, our new Coadjutor-Bishop, had promised our poor lepers to make them a visit. He kept his word. A few weeks after his return from San Francisco, whither he had gone for his consecration, he sent me word of his coming. But the steamer, as its starting had been delayed, anded him on the opposite side of our isle, where I went to meet him. On his arrival, we mounted our horses, and after some hours reached the summit of that tremendous ridge, two thousand feet high, which separates the leper colony from the rest of the island. About noon, we began to descend this dangerous precipice by a narrow hollowed path, and on reaching the plain, were received by a body of horsemen, handsomely dressed and carrying banners. These were a hundred of our lepers who were still strong enough to mount on horseback. After an address of welcome, we moved on to Kalawao. There, at the entrance of the cemetery, where a triumphal arch had been erected, Father Albert Montiton awaited us with the women and children, who received his lordship with songs of welcome.
After giving them his blessing, his lordship went to the church, where he made a short discourse, followed by Benediction.

In the afternoon, outside the church, took place a ceremony of quite another kind. The Bishop, who was delegated by the Princess Regent for this purpose, solemnly invested me with the cross of Knight Commander of the Royal Order of Kalakaua. But this cross of red and gold did not dispense me from attending the confessional; for on the morrow, the day of Confirmation, a number of people wished to receive Holy Communion. On that day, at the end of the singing Mass, his lordship baptized a dozen adults, and confirmed some fifty persons. After this we escorted his lordship in procession to Kalaupapa, where he administered the same sacraments. In all there were forty baptisms and one hundred confirmations. At the close of all, the principal men made a petition to his lordship for the enlargement of the church. He received their request favourably, and commissioned me to add to the old chapel three arms, so as to form a cross. Already a portion of the timber necessary for the work has arrived; for here all the buildings are of wood, because of the frequent earthquakes. I shall have therefore plenty of work as carpenter for the next three or four years.

After this the Bishop prepared for departure. So, with our mounted escort again, we proceeded to the foot of the mountain, where his lordship, after a few words of farewell, gave his blessing
and dismissed them. Then the Bishop and I, after an hour and a half of climbing, reached the top of the ridge; but could afford ourselves no rest, for we saw the steamer approaching in the distance; so putting our horses to their speed, we were lucky enough to be just in time. His lordship embarked for Honolulu, while I had another thirty miles to go to reach a station which I have to visit every month.

Many emigrants come to these islands, principally from China and from the Portuguese Islands. The Chinese brought the small-pox, which last spring made terrible ravages at Honolulu. For six months there was an absolute prohibition of communication between the islands; and as I happened at the time to be the only priest on this island, you can understand the inconvenience this isolation caused me. But I have always our Lord in the Tabernacle. In fact, without the Blessed Sacrament a position like mine would not be tolerable. But having our Lord with me, I am always gay, and work cheerfully for the relief of the unfortunate lepers. I occupy myself also with a little medical practice. An experience of eight years here has put me in a position to treat with success almost all the ailments of our lepers.

Your affectionate brother,

J. DAMIEN DE VEUSTER.

The Princess Regent sent Father Damien the following letter at the same time with the decoration:
Reverend Sir,—I desire to express to you my admiration for the heroic and disinterested service you are rendering to the most unhappy of my subjects; and to pay, in some measure, a public tribute to the devotion, patience, and unbounded charity, with which you give yourself to the corporal and spiritual relief of these unfortunate people, who are necessarily deprived of the affectionate care of their relations and friends.

I know well that your labours and sacrifices have no other motive than the desire to do good to those in distress; and that you look for no reward but from the great God, our Sovereign Lord, who directs and inspires you. Nevertheless, to content my own earnest desire, I beg of you, Reverend Father, to accept the decoration of Knight Commander of the Royal Order of Kalakaua, as a testimony of my sincere admiration for the efforts you are making to relieve the distress, and lessen the sufferings of these afflicted people, as I myself had occasion to see on my recent visit to the settlement. I am,

Your friend,

LILINOKALANI, Regent.

How long Father André remained to help him at Kalaupapa we do not exactly know; probably two years. He arrived in 1878, and we find Father Damien telling his brother that in the spring of 1881 he was alone again. In the next year, however, another priest of his Congregation, Father Albert Montiton, came to share his
labours. Father Albert had long been a missioner in another group of Pacific Islands, but on account of failing health was sent to Hawaii, the climate of which was thought better suited to him. He arrived there in 1874, and after eight years' labour in the large island, came to join Father Damien in 1882. A few extracts from a letter of this Father, dated from Kalaupapa, February 5, 1883, will serve as a supplement to Father Damien's descriptions.

"I arrived," he says, "at the leper settlement of Molokai in 1882, on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. After spending the rest of the year with Father Damien at Kalawao, I was permanently settled at the little port of Kalaupapa, which is the larger of the two villages, and contains the larger number of Catholics. The church has lately been doubled in size. Father Damien did all the carpentering with the aid of a few lepers. . . . As for the lepers, the Hawaiian Government provides fairly now for their material wants. Many of the stronger ones even earn a little money. Except at certain crises of the disease, they do not suffer acute pain. The affected parts are almost without feeling. I have seen them sometimes take a knife and chop off their dead fingers or toes, just as if they were pieces of wood. It happens not unfrequently that they burn themselves without knowing it, by going too near the fire. . . . In the two villages, besides the Catholic churches, there are also small meeting-houses both of Calvinists and
Mormons; they, are, however, not much frequented. In my village of Kalaupapa, since I have been here, there have been seventy-five baptisms of adults.... What gives me perhaps most anxiety is the education of the children. The Hawaiian Government has copied the United States, in making the instruction given in the State-supported schools entirely secular and refusing to allow any religious teaching. At the chief places of our missions here, Superiors have managed by great efforts to get up free schools without State aid. But this is impossible in the leper colony. Besides there are numbers of children here without parents, who play the vagabond without check. Father Damien, after years of persevering efforts, has succeeded in collecting under his own care a number of these orphans. I hope in time I may be able to do as much."

It is interesting to read in the same periodical (Missions Catholiques), for December, 1883, "The school at Kalaupapa counts over fifty Catholic pupils. Father Albert, after continued representations to the Government, has succeeded at last in obtaining the dismissal of the Calvinist school-mistress, and the appointment of a Catholic in her place, who will at least allow him to catechize the children."

Father Damien took advantage of his companion's presence at Kalaupapa, to devote himself, if possible, with still greater energy to the care of souls at Kalawao. His orphans became too
numerous for their two houses, and he immediately set about building new ones. So great was the influence which the holy man had obtained among the lepers, that day after day he gained fresh souls to God. Thus he writes to his brother with frank simplicity: "There are a fair number of Protestants here. Almost all end by seeing the truth; and I have the great consolation of beholding them die in the bosom of the Catholic Church."

The following extraordinary incident shall be told in the Father’s own words written to his brother:

"Among the lepers was a Calvinist woman, as she called herself, who remained, obstinate in spite of all my efforts to reclaim her. To all I said she would reply jokingly and turn my words aside. One day I was summoned to her bedside, and soon perceived that she was possessed by a spirit not her own. As she made signs of a wish to write, I handed her a pencil and a piece of paper. The writing ran thus: 'I am not an evil spirit; I am the angel guardian of this woman. For six months I have been urging her to be converted: now I am using this violent means. To-morrow she will be herself again, and will be converted.' I could hardly believe my eyes; but on my return the next day, I found her completely changed from her old obstinacy. She declared that she wished to be a Catholic, and asked for Baptism. I showed her the writing. 'Do you recognize that?' I asked. 'No,' she said.
'Have you felt anything lately?' 'For the last six months, every night, I have heard an interior voice telling me to become a Catholic. I always resisted, but now I am conquered.' She was instructed and baptized, and shows a fervour that edifies us all.'

One thing more has yet to be mentioned as illustrating at once the devotion of the poor lepers and the effect of their holy pastor's teaching. There was nothing in which the lepers took more pleasure than in the processions of the Blessed Sacrament. Of all the beautiful and touching sights in Molokai this held the foremost place. "I myself," says Father Damien, writing to his brother, "strong, healthy, and vigorous, bearing in my hands the Blessed Sacrament, was followed and preceded by one long line of lepers, some deprived of hands, others of feet, crawling along on their knees as well as they could, joining in the great act of adoration."

One short glance now at Father Damien in his own little house. The only kind of recreation the Father allowed himself was the care of his fowls. They were his pets, his playthings, and at his call they would flock around him, lighting on his outstretched arms and feeding from his hand. But, like everything about Father Damien, they were destined for practical purposes. When the need came they were willingly sacrificed for the benefit of his lepers, or the entertainment of his friends. If he had a few moments to himself it was spent in the garden, or on some bit of carpen-
tering, at which he was very skilful. He performed all his own housework, and whatever was necessary to be done in the chapel, which added to his other duties that of sacristan. A native, not a leper, mended his clothes and washed for him. Yet in spite of such precautions as these, his escape for eleven years seems almost miraculous. But it was God’s will that he should not go entirely free. The title which he loved so much and of which he was so proud, he was soon to have the right to call his own.
CHAPTER V.

His Last Years and Death (1885—1889).

Father Damien had never had the least dread of leprosy. From the first moment of his sacrifice he had daily expected to see the first signs of it showing themselves in him. It was not, however, till the year 1884 that he began to suspect its presence. In 1885 he was made certain of it in the following manner. One day after his return from a visit to Hawaii, feeling unwell, he determined to take a hot foot-bath. The water brought him was scalding, but he plunged his feet into it, and did not discover the fact till he saw the effects of the scald. Father Damien knew at once the meaning of this insensibility. One of the first symptoms of the presence of the disease is a loss or lessening of sensation in the part affected. A numbness of some fresh joint or limb was of daily occurrence among the lepers. They would sometimes seriously burn themselves in an infected part without being aware of it.

The doctors' examination confirmed the idea that infection had taken hold, and Dr. Arning announced to the Father the result of their diagnosis. Father Damien was by no means dis-
tressed. He now felt that he was still more closely united to his lepers. The lepers became nearer and dearer to him. It was a real satisfaction to know that he was to lay down his life for them. He still continued in his laborious work without in the least relaxing his exertions. We learn the spirit in which he accepts the stroke, in the letters he wrote about this time. He writes to his Bishop, Mgr. Koeckmann, thus:

"I cannot come to Honolulu, for leprosy has attacked me. There are signs of it on my left cheek and ear, and my eyebrows are beginning to fall; I shall soon be quite disfigured. As I have no doubt of the real character of the malady, I remain calm, resigned, and very happy in the midst of my people. The good God knows what is best for my sanctification, and I say daily, Fiat voluntas tua, with a ready heart."

The Bishop himself, in a letter published in the *Missions Catholiques*, April 30, 1886, writes thus: "The Rev. Father Damien, who has long been justly called the Apostle of the Lepers, since with heroic devotedness he has for the last thirteen years voluntarily exiled himself among them at Molokai, has at last himself fallen a victim to his charity. The disease has attacked him by God's permission, to lead him by the way of suffering to his great reward: for having once appeared, it never relaxes its hold till death comes. But he makes no complaint, for he has always looked forward to it. The charity and devotedness of Father Damien and the Franciscan Sisters
are naturally producing a powerful effect in favour of the Catholic religion here."

Yes, he was a leper at last. He had counted the cost, from the time he had first given himself to his work of superhuman charity among these poor outcasts. He was theirs to live or die as God should please. The most perfect health away from his dear lepers would have been no boon to him. To one of those who visited him after his seizure, he said: "I would not be cured, if the price of my cure was that I must leave the island, and give up my work."

We here insert a letter of his to his family, dated towards the close of 1885. It will be noticed that, though he knew his fate at this time, he makes no mention of it throughout the letter. He would not pain his mother by the news: indeed, we may feel certain that as he had made up his mind to it for so many years, it was now very little in his own thoughts.

LETTER XXVI.

V.C.J.S. Kalawao, Molokai, Nov. 25, 1885.

My dear Mother, Brothers, and all the members of the family,—To-day, the feast of St. Catherine, while saying Mass, I thought of all of you, and particularly of my dear mother, asking our good God, through the intercession of this her patroness, to bless her and all belonging to her. As my mother is now of a venerable age, I almost expect to hear, by your long-expected letter, that she is not (as she used to be) quite as active as a
hare. I hope, however, that she is in good health, as well as the rest of you.

As for the Curé of Molokai, it is always the same style of life for him. As I have been since last March the only priest here, I have no longer the time, nor indeed the desire, to make visits outside of this famous settlement. Every Sunday I celebrate Mass twice in my double parish; I preach four times, and give Benediction twice. In the evening I am generally very tired. During the week I visit my numerous sick, and busy myself with my orphans, who are all lepers. It is more or less repulsive to nature to be always surrounded by these unfortunate children, but I find consolation in it: for being now a bit of a doctor, like my patron St. Damian, I try, with the help of God, to alleviate their bodily pains, and so bring them on in the way of salvation. They learn their catechism well, and are present daily at morning Mass and the evening Rosary.

I have to thank Gérard for the kindness he has done me in subscribing for me to the two publications, the Missions Catholiques and the Annales Catholiques, which I receive regularly. They are especially interesting in my isolation here. I beg him to continue paying the yearly subscription, that these journals may not fail to come. Nay, I advise you (Gérard) to get the Missions Catholiques for your family: it is very instructive and very interesting; your children, and those of Léonce, would take delight in it. As Christmas and the New Year are at hand, I wish you all the bless-
ings of the season. Our learned young nieces must begin to write me all the news of Tremeloo. A line from mother, from Léonce, from Gérard, would be most welcome to me. Let us persevere in the service of God, in frequenting the holy sacraments, and praying for one another.

Your loving son and brother,

JOSEPH DAMIEN DE VEUSTER.

It seems somewhat surprising that, towards the end of 1885, when it was well known that Father Damien had contracted the disease, he should have been left, as he tells us in this letter, the only priest in the place. It is clear from this that his former companion, Father Albert Montiton, had been removed from Kalaupapa, after about two years' residence, and no successor appointed.

In less than a year after this letter was written his beloved mother died. She had heard of his having taken the contagion, and the shock no doubt shortened her declining days. Père Pamphile gives us a short account of this in the notes he furnished for this biography.

"Three years ago (that is, in 1886) our mother was on her death-bed, when the Belgian papers announced the leprosy of my brother Damien. It is clear that they exaggerated his state, for among other things they said that his flesh was falling from him in rags. Some one imprudently read this account to my poor mother. She listened attentively, but resigned herself in her
sorrow. 'Well, then,' she said, 'we shall go to Heaven together.' She died on the 15th of August, 1886, retaining all her faculties up to the last. On the morning of the day on which she died, she warned her grand-daughter, who was attending her, not to leave her for a moment; she passed the few hours that remained to her, keeping strictly to the order that she had settled for herself from the beginning of her sickness, that is to say, reciting her beads at stated times, making meditation, or listening to pious reading. About four o'clock in the afternoon, feeling her end approaching, she turned towards a picture of the Blessed Virgin, then to the portrait of my brother Joseph, making an inclination of the head to each; after which she gradually sank, and quietly expired."

Père Pamphile had written to his brother to tell him of his mother's sickness, and had evidently told him also of his own petition to his Superiors to be allowed to join Damien at the Léproserie. It will be remembered that the latter, in one of his earliest letters to his brother from Hawaii, advised him to study English on his way out, evidently having understood from him that he would try to follow as soon as he was well enough. Pamphile was, however, retained by his Superiors as Professor at Louvain to the scholastics of the Congregation. At this time he renewed his instances to his Superiors, to be allowed to go out and help his brother in his work, which must necessarily be getting more
and more exhausting for him. The next letter of Father Damien speaks in terms of the most touching gratitude of this attempt of his brother to join him; but, as we might expect, adds, that whatever the decision of Superiors might be, it was certain to be the best for both of them. It must have been written in the latter half of 1886, but is undated.

LETTER XXVII.

V.C.J.S. Kalawao, Molokai.

My very dear Brother Pamphile,—I received your welcome letter of the 30th of May, with the news of our dear mother's sickness. While hoping that God will restore her health, we can scarcely expect to see it continue as strong as it used to be. Eighty-two years of a pious and laborious life cannot be far from the reward of eternal repose promised to God's servants. Your frequent visits will supply for my absence; take care to assure her that I always remember her at the altar. I cannot doubt that she is preparing, like a good Christian, for a holy death. Léonce and Gérard, I take for granted, live exemplary lives. I need not ask you to interest yourself in their spiritual welfare, and that of the whole family. Our good God has fixed your residence in our native country, that your special mission might be to labour for the salvation of our family and others of our countrymen, as mine has been clearly traced out among the lepers of Molokai. I have sent on your letter to the Bishop, Mgr.
Hermann; but the best both for you and for me will be, to leave it entirely to the ecclesiastical and religious authorities to decide whether I shall have the consolation to have as my fellow-labourer a brother, to whom I am indebted after God that I was chosen for the missions. You understand me, I know, without my saying all that I think.

My malady seems to yield somewhat to the Japanese treatment, which I have been under for the last five weeks. I enclose in this a letter I have written to our Very Rev. Father General: I will ask you to send it on, after having read it, and copied it if you wish. I am too full of business to be able to write at greater length to you, or to the rest of the family.

The Hawaiian Government has commissioned me to build here a large hospital for several hundred lepers, to be treated entirely under my direction. So I have to work, not only as priest, but as doctor and architect. Happily my strength has somewhat returned. Greetings to everybody at Louvain and Tremeloo. Write again soon.

Your brother,

Joseph Damien De Veuster.

Here is no relaxation of labour certainly, and he was still the only resident priest. Another Father, it is true, visited him at intervals of two months; but these flying visits did not relieve him of any portion of the charge of his "double parish," as he calls it.

About this time, false reports of his death
appeared in the European papers, which for some years had vied with one another in giving all the news they could pick up about his life and work; for his heroic self-sacrifice and devotedness had now attained a world-wide celebrity. A universal chorus of panegyric on all sides accompanied every mention of his name; and it does one's heart good to record that the one single discordant note, though barely audible, was at once silenced by a storm of indignation.

We give here an extract from a letter of the Father who visited him from time to time, viz., Father Colomban Beissel; it is dated September 29, 1886. "Since my first visit to Molokai, I have repeated it about every two months. The state of Father Damien De Veuster was rather bad. I noticed at each returning visit some new symptoms, and an increase of the malady. The good Father, however, never lost courage. 'I am glad,' he said to me with admirable resignation, 'that there is now no further doubt about my sickness, I am a leper.' But at my last visit, on Monday the 27th of September, I saw a change for the better. The patient had for two months been following the treatment of a Japanese doctor, and found a sensible improvement. No more pain, appetite returned, better sleep. The Father was strong enough to make his rounds in the settlement, both on foot and on horseback. Here is another favour of Providence. A young American has come to help him: a young layman converted from Anglicanism. At the news of
Father Damien's illness, this young man resolved, as a token of gratitude to God for the grace of conversion, to consecrate himself to the assistance of Father Damien and his sick flock. All this is just the contrary to what the papers announce; let us hope that Father Damien will be enabled, for a long time yet, to carry on his work of charity among the lepers."

We see by an expression at the close of the following letter, that throughout 1887 also, he remained the only resident priest. This letter is especially interesting from its being written in great part in English. The English is not perfect, and we have ventured to make a few verbal corrections.

LETTER XXVIII.

V.C.J.S. Molokai, November 9, 1887.

My dear Brother,—Having been informed that some of the Belgian papers had stated the death of your exiled brother, I suppose that is the reason why you do not write me any more. Unfortunately Almighty God has not yet called me out of this miserable world; and here I am nearly useless now, and I do not know for how many years more; yet I am in my daily occupations as usual, since it has pleased our Divine Saviour to entrust to my care the spiritual welfare of the unfortunate lepers exiled at Molokai. As you know, a long time ago I myself have been chosen by Divine Providence as a victim to this loathsome disease. I hope to be eternally thankful
to God for this favour; as it seems to me that this disease may shorten a little, and even make more direct, my road to our dear fatherland. Such being my hope, I have accepted this malady as my special cross, which I try to carry, as Simon the Cyrenian, in the footsteps of our Divine Master. Please help me with your good prayers to obtain persevering strength, till I happily arrive at the top of Calvary.

Though leprosy has a pretty strong hold on my body, and has already disfigured me somewhat, I continue to be robust and strong, and my terrible pains in the feet are gone. So far the disease has not yet distorted my hands, and I continue to say Mass every day. This privilege is my greatest consolation, for my own sake as well as for the benefit of my numerous fellow-sufferers, who every Sunday fill pretty well my two churches, in both of which I permanently reserve the Blessed Sacrament. I have here living with me fifty orphan boys, and they keep me pretty well busy during my free time. Death had brought down the number of patients here to about five hundred, but now the Government is sending new ones by dozens every week, and it is expected that shortly our number will be doubled or even tripled, and therefore if Almighty God spares my strength, I shall have more and more work to harvest the poor souls of those lepers who obtain the grace of conversion. Please recommend all your spiritual children to pray for the conversion of a great number of our
unfortunate outcasts, because many of them are more afflicted with spiritual leprosy than with physical. The devil has imported here the immoral Mormons (who are their greatest enemies), to prevent the conversion of poor sinners. How difficult it is to gain one whom they have ensnared!

I do my best to plant and water the field that my Divine Saviour has confided to me. Here and there I pull up a weed; but to obtain the true fruit of conversion, I need in a special manner the prayers of devout and compassionate souls. So, as you are not coming in person, you must assist in this exceptional mission of mine by praying and getting prayers for us.

November 16.—I still continue to be the only priest in Molokai. Father Columban Beissel, and quite lately Father Wendelin Mullers, are the only ones I have seen for sixteen months. As I have plenty of work, the time seems very short to me. The joy and contentment of heart that the Sacred Hearts deluge me with, make me consider myself the happiest missioner in the world. Consequently the sacrifice of my health, which our good God has deigned to accept that He may render my ministry among the lepers more fruitful, appears after all but a slight affair, and even profitable for me. I venture to say, with a little perhaps of St. Paul’s meaning, I am dead, and my life is hidden with Christ in God.

I have no news to give you. But I would ask

* The rest of this letter is translated from the French.
to God for this favour; as it seems to me that this disease may shorten a little, and even make more direct, my road to our dear fatherland. Such being my hope, I have accepted this malady as my special cross, which I try to carry, as Simon the Cyrenian, in the footsteps of our Divine Master. Please help me with your good prayers to obtain persevering strength, till I happily arrive at the top of Calvary.

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I do my best to plant and water the field that my Divine Saviour has confided to me. Here and there I pull up a weed; but to obtain the true fruit of conversion, I need in a special manner the prayers of devout and compassionate souls. So, as you are not coming in person, you must assist in this exceptional mission of mine by praying and getting prayers for us.

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¹ The rest of this letter is translated from the French.
you to convey my brotherly love to Léonce and Gérard, and their families; also my kind remembrances to all our good Fathers, especially to the Father Superior, and to all our brothers of Louvain. I recommend myself and my poor patients to their good prayers.

Tell our nieces to send me a long account about our family and our village; and give me yourself all the news about Louvain and the Congregation.

Your brother,

JOSEPH DAMIEN DE VÉUSTER.

Father Columban, who is here for a few days, sends you his greetings. Père Grégoire has just been summoned to join me at the Léproserie; so I shall no longer be alone. À revoir au ciel!

Alms and presents for his churches and orphanage now frequently reached him from many quarters; and in this tribute of admiration England was neither last nor least. The Rev. Hugh Chapman, an Anglican clergyman, Vicar of St. Luke's, Camberwell, collected and sent to him at different times nearly £2,000; and Mr. Edward Clifford went out himself to Molokai, both to pay a visit of veneration to the holy priest, and to carry a quantity of useful and costly presents from noble ladies, and others whose sympathies had been deeply stirred by the frequent public mention of this martyr of charity. This gentleman gave to the public on his return a most
appreciative description of his visit, which has contributed not a little to the intense admiration for Father Damien which is universally manifested among Englishmen.

Even in 1888, Father Damien's energies were not exhausted. He set about a new work before he passed away to his reward. In the last year of his life he was busily engaged in building a new church. But he was daily wasting away with leprosy, and the fine strong man of old was now disfigured and in gradual decay. Yet he worked on to the end, calmly awaiting the moment of his deliverance. The last letter he wrote to his brother, dated February 19, 1889, reveals his state of mind admirably:

LETTER XXIX.

February 19, 1889.

My dear Brother Pamphile,—Considering the nature of the disease from which, by the will of God I am suffering, I abstain from writing to you as before, as well as to the rest of my family. Still I am quite happy and contented, and though seriously ill, all I desire is the accomplishment of the holy will of God.

I have with me a priest from Liège, Father Conrady, and Father Wendelin is in another village. Besides these I have here two Brothers, who help me in the care of a hundred orphans who are under my charge. The hospital contains more than a thousand lepers. We have also Sisters here; three Franciscan nurses.
The English—in London—as well Protestants as Catholics, show the greatest sympathy towards myself and the work to which I am devoted.

Kindly remember me to all the Fathers and Brothers of Louvain, to Gérard, Léonce, and all the family. I am still able, but not without some difficulty, to stand every day at the altar, where I do not forget any of you. Do you, in return, pray and get prayers for me, who am being gently drawn towards the grave. May God strengthen me, and give me the grace of perseverance and of a happy death.

Your devoted brother,

Damien De Veuster.

This is his last letter. We add the details of his death from a letter of one of the Fathers who were with him.

Letter of Father Wendelin.

On Saturday, the 23rd of March, he was just as usual, going about with his accustomed activity. That was the last time I saw him thus, as I had to return to Kalaupapa for the moment.

From the 28th he never left his room. On that day he arranged his temporal affairs, and when he had signed his papers, he remarked to me: "How happy I am to have given all to Monseigneur! Now I die poor, having nothing of my own."

On Thursday, the 28th of March, he took to his bed, and on Saturday, the 30th, made his
preparation for death. It was really edifying to see him, he seemed so happy. When I had heard his general confession, I made my confession to him, after which we together renewed the vows which bind us to the Congregation. Next day he received the Holy Viaticum. During the day he was bright and cheerful as usual. “Look at my hands,” he said, “all the wounds are healing, and the crust is becoming black—that is a sign of death, as you know very well. Look at my eyes. I have seen so many lepers die, that I cannot be mistaken. Death is not far off. I should have liked to have seen the Bishop again, but the good God is calling me to celebrate Easter with Himself. May God be blessed for it!”

After this he thought only of preparing for death. There was no longer any room for doubt, one could see death was fast approaching.

On April the 2nd, Father Conradi gave him Extreme Unction. “How good God is!” he said to me in the course of the day; “to have preserved me long enough to have two priests by my side to assist me in my last moments, and then to know that the good Sisters of Charity are at the hospital—that was my Nunc dimittis. The work of the lepers is assured, I am no longer necessary to them, so before long I shall go up yonder.” “When you are there, Father,” I asked, “you won’t forget those whom you are leaving orphans?” “Oh, no,” he said, “if I have any credit with God, I shall intercede for
all who are in the Léproserie.” I begged him to leave me his mantle, like Elias, that I might inherit his great heart. “But what would you do with it?” he asked; “it is all full of leprosy.” Then I asked him for his blessing, which he gave me with tears in his eyes. He also blessed the heroic daughters of St. Francis, for whose coming he had so long prayed.

The following days the good Father rallied a little; we even had hopes of keeping him for a time amongst us. The good Sisters often visited him. What I most admired in him was his admirable patience. He who was so ardent, so active, so robust, to be nailed down to his miserable couch, without, however, suffering much. He was laid on the ground on a wretched mattress, like the poorest leper, and we had great difficulty in making him accept a bed. And how poorly off he was! He who had spent so much money in relieving the lepers, had forgotten himself so far as not to have even a change of linen, or sheets for his bed.

His attachment to the Congregation was admirable. How often he said to me, “Father, you represent the Congregation here for me, don’t you? Let us say the prayers together. How sweet it is to die a child of the Sacred Heart!” Several times he told me to write to our Very Rev. Father, and tell him that his greatest consolation at this moment was to die a member of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts.

On Saturday, April 13, he was much worse, and
all hope of improvement was at an end. Shortly after midnight he received our Lord in Holy Communion for the last time. Soon he was to see Him face to face. From time to time he lost consciousness. When I went to see him he recognized me, and spoke to me, and we took leave of one another, as I had to go to Kalaupapa for the following day, which was Sunday. On the morrow, after the services were over, I returned and found the good Father fairly strong, but his mind was somewhat confused. I could see in his eyes resignation, joy, and contentment, but his lips could no longer articulate the acts which his heart was making. Now and then he would affectionately press my hand. On Monday, April 15, I received a note from Father Conrady, saying that the good Father was in his agony. I hurried off to see him, but on my way another messenger met me, and informed me of his death. He died without a struggle, as if falling asleep. He gently passed away, after having spent more than sixteen years amongst the horrors of leprosy.

The good shepherd has given his life for his sheep. When I arrived he was already dressed in his soutane. All signs of leprosy had disappeared from his face. The wounds in his hands were quite dried. About eleven o'clock we carried him to the church, where he remained exposed till eight the next morning, surrounded by lepers who prayed for their revered Father. On Monday afternoon the good Sisters came to decorate his coffin. They lined the inside with white silk, and
covered the outside with black cloth, on which was a white cross. The next day, April 16, I offered the Holy Sacrifice for my beloved confrère, after which the funeral procession set out, passing in front of the new church on its way to the cemetery. First came the cross-bearer, then the singers and the members of a Confraternity, then the Sisters with the women and girls, and after them the coffin, borne by eight white men, all of them lepers. Behind the coffin walked the officiating priest, accompanied by Father Conrado and the acolytes, followed by the Brothers with the boys and men.

Father Damien had begun his life at Molokai amidst the greatest privations. He was even obliged to pass his first nights under a large tree. In accordance with the wish he had expressed to be buried under this same tree, I caused a grave to be prepared during his sickness at the spot indicated. There his body lies, to await its glorious resurrection. It looks towards the altar. The grave is sealed up by means of a thick layer of cement. Therein rest the remains of the good Father Damien, whom the world calls, and calls rightly, the "hero of charity."

PÈRE WENDELIN, SS.CC.

Molokai, April 17, 1889.

P.S.—Several days later a solemn service was held at the Cathedral in Honolulu for our beloved Father, at which all the principal persons in the island were present. Mgr. Hermann offici-
His Death

ated pontifically, assisted by Fathers Clement, Sylvester, and Raymund. Before the Gospel he turned to the immense congregation, and delivered in English and in Canaque a short discourse, in which he dwelt upon the heroic devotion of him whom we all revered.

THE END.