

Benevolent and Social Societies.

The acquisition of California by the American Republic drew the attention of the world to this coast, and when, a short time subsequently, the announcement was made of the marvelous fields found here, the bold, the enterprising and the adventurous of every country, race, religion and character, turned their steps hither, and the most cosmopolitan state of our Union was created. A people of such elements, widely separated from their native homes, friends and associations, and governments, naturally gathered each to his class, order, or nation, and thus, at an early date, at the central port of the country, were formed some of those societies of grand benevolence which now form so distinguishing a feature of San Francisco's society. The very isolation, so far removed from the succour of relatives or the protection of their flag made these organizations a necessity, and the generous and kindly spirit pervading the brave pioneer class with the abundant wealth the soil gave, rendered such associations more than usually effective. Sickness and death are inevitable, and want, through accident, disease or improvidence, is the lot of some, however bountiful the country, or genial the climate. To relieve suffering, assist the depressed, and bury the dead, have been the objects of the benevolent societies formed. The good deeds performed, and the constant care and watchfulness exercised, have given to San Francisco a world-wide reputation which is richly deserved. Aside from the organized societies, the popular benevolence is proven by the large sums often given for various objects at the call of charity or sympathy. Millions of dollars have been sent abroad when the good heart thought it was required to alleviate distress either among our own people or those of foreign lands, and never is relief called in vain for any individual case of destitution found in our midst. Fortunately cases of destitution are rare, and the provisions made by the law and by social organizations prevent any necessity for such distress as drives to importunate beggary.

The large sums sent with such a willing hand to aid the sick and wounded of the Union armies during the war of the rebellion and which constituted such a noble support, will always be referred to, in this connection, with just pride. Recently a similar exhibition of benevolence and patriotic sympathy has been manifested on the part of the German and French citizens, each party having sent to their suffering countrymen nearly a quarter of a million dollars to aid the wounded of the battle field, assist the widows and orphans, and restore prosperity as far as it lay in their power. The grand piles of gold sent to the distant home will stand as lasting monuments of the golden state of the far West, and of the munificence of her people. Upwards of four hundred thousand dollars were collected and remitted in the brief space of six months, the free contributions of those classes of our citizens.

As individuals, and the citizens *en masse*, have shown unequalled benevolence, so do they manifest the same disposition in their numerous organizations for social and charitable purposes. There are now seventy such organizations in the city and many of these are divided into lodges, groves, stamms, vereins, councils, posts, etc., making a total of one hundred and fifty-three, some having upwards of a thousand members. These are of every class of reputable orders, and include those of every nationality that make up our population. From their number and strength it would appear that nearly all the people of San Francisco were members of one or other of these orders. Their wealth is shewn in the possession of asylums, halls, hospitals, and schools, and the fine appearance members make on days of public celebration.

As their name implies, the general object of the societies is benevolence, assisting unfortunate members, or their wives and children, when in sickness, burying them when dead, or, if of foreign birth, aiding their return to their native land. But by no means do all limit their charities to their members. Several of these noble organizations are controlled by ladies whose care is for the orphan, the sick, and needy of all classes, and for the reclamation of the degraded of their own sex. Two asylums, generous homes for the tender orphans, are under their control, and the excellent condition of the charge is evidence of the care bestowed. As early as 1851, the gentle Sisters of Charity, as ever devoting their lives to the holy cause of doing good to others, founded the Roman Catholic Orphan Asylum on Market street, and have continued it with the addition of schools and further extensions to the present. The Protestant Orphan Asylum founded by prominent ladies of this city in 1854, and on Laguna street near Market, have erected an elegant and commodious building, costing \$60,000. At the asylum are two hundred and forty children unfortunate in their orphanage, but most fortunate in having such a noble home and parental care as the benevolent ladies have prepared for them.

But the ladies' charity has not ended here. The San Francisco Female Hospital; the Lying-in and Foundling Asylum; the Magdalen Asylum; the St. Mary's Ladies Society and others, attest the scope of their ministering care. The kind attention and the liberal expenditures by the ladies of San Francisco, without distinction of nationality, race, or religion, is most honorable and praiseworthy, and is a subject of just pride to every citizen of San Francisco.

The broad field of labor of the San Francisco Benevolent Association has been well filled, the members exercising a generous guardianship over the distress and wants of the City. No membership of other societies, nor any race or condition, forbids their action, but their compassion, like the cloak of charity, covers all. The Young Men's Christian Association occupies a noble position among the benevolent societies of San Francisco. Possessing a fine hall, with library, gymnasium, baths etc., it is well enabled to extend the hand of charity to all, to guide the erring and to give pleasure and instruction to its members and protégés.

The benevolent societies, composed of people of foreign birth, for the object of aiding their fellow-countrymen, are numerous and efficient. The English, Scotch, Welsh and Irish have their organizations divided into several classes and divisions, all with a large number of members. The British Benevolent Society exercises a supervision over the wants of the subjects of that empire. The Germans, French, Italians, Russians, Portuguese, Mexicans, Greeks, Scandinavians, Slavonians, Hebrews and Chinese maintain organizations for the same purpose, showing a benevolence of the highest character, and most worthily occupying their appropriate field of usefulness. The German General Benevolent Society is a large and effective organization, having one thousand three hundred and forty-two members residing in the city, and four hundred and eighty in the interior. This generous society maintains a hospital worthy of its high character, and which would be an honor to any city or state.

The French Benevolent Society is an institution in keeping with the most noble of its class here, where the rank is of the highest grade. This society has one of the finest hospitals of the State, occupying a spacious block bounded by Fifth and Sixth streets, and south of Bryant street. This is a spacious edifice of brick, with pleasant gardens and ornamented grounds surrounding it, making it a most desirable home to the invalid. Other nationalities maintain their hospitals and their homes, thus