

LECTURE ON OLIVER CROMWELL.

THE good folks of Kumara have been on the tip-toe of expectation during the last week in consequence of Mr. J. J. Crofts having announced his intention of delivering a lecture on Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans, in reply to one which had been delivered in this town on the same subject by the Rev. C. Clarke.

Although Mr. Crofts' ability as a speaker had been already known in the West Coast, and, through your columns, to the whole of New Zealand by his vigorous opposition to the "Secular Education Bill" of the late Ministry, and in his eloquent speeches in defence of Catholic Education, still it was expected by the partisans of the view which Mr. Clarke took of the *Lord Protector*, that he would not be able to succeed in his attempt to reply, with successful effect, to the eloquent and reverend lecturer. Those that thought so were grievously disappointed at hearing Mr. Crofts in the Theatre Royal on Saturday evening last.

His lecture may be characterised without exaggeration as being brilliant, logical, eloquent, and consistent with historical truth. He did not confine himself to Irish Catholic historians, and quoted largely from Macaulay, Hallam, Clarendon, and others. He started from the "plantation," or rather, as the lecturer appropriately designated it, the "confiscation of Ulster" by James I. He glanced rapidly over the quarrels between Charles I. and his Parliament. He painted in nervous English the baseness, ingratitude, and treachery of Charles and his minister, Strafford. The rising of 1641, the causes which led to it, the various battles fought, the disposition of the forces under the various generals on both sides, and the number of slain and wounded were aptly and minutely described. The "cessation" and its effects on the Confederate cause were touchingly portrayed.

His description of the Battle of Benburb, Owen Roe O'Neil's generalship, the impetuous charge of the Irish troops, and the complete rout of Monroe's forces, with the latter's ignoble flight without hat, cloak, or sword, to Carrickfergus, where he shut himself up in the fortress, was received with loud and prolonged applause.

The diabolical cruelties of Coote, Inchiquin, Ranelagh, and the other Puritan generals were feelingly depicted. But the butcheries of Cromwell in Drogheda and Wexford sent a thrill of horror through the audience.

He clearly proved that the Rev. Mr. Clarke was guilty of *suppression veri*, and of offering a direct insult to the Irish Catholic nation by completely ignoring its existence during a most important era of English history, when the changes wrought in England reacted with such terrible and disastrous effects on the religion and people of Ireland.

It would be impossible in the limited space of a single letter to do anything like justice to the lecture.

He concluded with a brilliant peroration on the intellectual, physical, and moral character of the Irish race, which completely displaced the implied calumny contained in the ignoring of, or any allusion to Ireland, by the Rev. C. Clarke in his lecture on Oliver Cromwell.

It is to be hoped that Mr. Crofts will cause his lecture to be published in pamphlet form. If he does, I trust a copy of it will be found in the house of every Irishman in the colonies.

Mr. Crofts certainly deserves the thanks of all Irishmen for his able and successful refutation of Mr. Clarke's fulsome panegyric on the greatest monster that Ireland in her long list of cruel persecutors suffered and bled under.

Dec. 18, 1877.

P. DUGGAN, R.C.S.F.

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, NELSON.

(From the Nelson Colonist, 20th December.)

YESTERDAY afternoon the prizes were presented to the children attending these schools, who had by their efforts gained the awards. The schoolroom had been made more gay for the occasion by the tasteful arrangement of flowers, etc., and upon the walls were exhibited many highly creditable specimens of the skill and handiwork of the scholars in either of the schools. Mr. Curtis, M.H.R., had been requested to distribute the prizes, and that gentleman was supported by the Rev. Fathers Garin and Mahoney, Judge Broad, Mr. J. Shephard, etc. The distribution at the girls' school took priority, and there the proceedings commenced with a programme of recitations and vocal music, embracing over 30 performances, the whole of which proved highly creditable to the scholars and to the excellent ladies in whose charge the school is. At the conclusion of this somewhat long but pleasant prelude, they proceeded to the business more immediately to hand.

Mr. Curtis said he had been asked to give these prizes to those young ladies who had earned them by reason of their efficiency in the different branches. He had always taken the very strongest interest in these schools, seeing the great amount of good they had done, and he only hoped they would continue in the future as they had done in the past. He did trust that the changes in the law which had been made last session would not have any effect in materially reducing the usefulness of the schools. He would only add before proceeding to distribute the prizes, that he hoped they would all enjoy their holidays, and that they would all come back with the full determination to work, that they would do as well, at all events, as they had done last year, and, if possible a great deal better. He then went through the prize list, presenting the prizes.

The Rev. Father Garin wished the pupils to remember the work they had done the last year; they had learned many useful things, which would be more useful to them than if they had been at manual work, because their work now was for life. Those who worked manually might gain money, but on an accident befalling them they would lose all that, but the useful things they learned at school they would never lose, so that what they learned now was more precious than money. To those who were leaving school he would

advise that they made a proper use of what they learned. When a soldier was brought up to defend his country he was taught to master his weapons, but if he only used his information to commit murder he abused his knowledge. Now if they did not turn their knowledge to proper account they would be like the soldier who used his knowledge for wrong doing. He warned them of the danger of reading bad books, and advised them to be careful in their choice. He said they could write well, and would no doubt be happy to write to their friends, but they must remember that if they did not write according to good manners they would soon lose the esteem in which they might be held. He thanked Mr. Curtis for his action during the last session, when he had supported their cause as far as possible, and he also thanked those who seconded his efforts. He also expressed his thanks to the Hon. Mr. Larnach, who had visited their schools and shown his interest in their welfare by requesting his acceptance of a handsome donation to be expended in prizes. It was his hope and desire that they would all enjoy their holiday, and he wished them all success in the future, and for the present, a happy Christmas.

Mr. J. Shephard said the Rev. Father Garin was rather a hard schoolmaster, for he insisted on his saying a few words, and he was confident the scholars were of opinion they had been kept long enough. What he had seen that day only strengthened all that he had previously heard of the institution where they were now met, and which conferred so many advantages. They must all feel, with Father Garin and Mr. Curtis, how unfortunate it would be for those advantages to be taken away, or if the efforts that were being made to secure the continuance of the schools did not succeed. He expressed his extreme pleasure in seeing so many happy faces around him, and hoped they would long continue to gather there, and that the people of Nelson would long have the opportunity of having their children, so well taught as they had been at this institution.

The company then adjourned to the Boys' School, where there was a similar ceremony, Mr. Curtis prefacing the distribution by telling the boys they had done all the speech-making at the Girls' School. He then delivered the prizes.

The Rev. Father Mahoney then requested that the boys might be allowed to express their minds to their teachers, whereupon two of the leading boys stepped forward with addresses, and in turn each read one. The first was to Mr. Richards, expressing most kindly feelings, and there were presented to him some handsome volumes and a paper knife; the second was to Mr. Kavanagh, in the same strain, and which was accompanied by an inkstand and thermometer.

Mr. Curtis made the presentation on behalf of the boys with suitable remarks, and Mr. Richards and Mr. Kavanagh feelingly thanked the boys.

The proceedings terminated with three cheers for the Rev. Father Garin, three times three for Mr. Curtis, three more for Rev. Father Mahoney, and yet another three for Mr. Larnach; and more for other friends.

OPENING OF A ROMAN CATHOLIC READING-ROOM.

A NUMEROUSLY-ATTENDED meeting of Roman Catholics was held recently, in St. Patrick's Hall, Hobson-street, on the occasion of the opening of a reading-room in connection with the Christian Doctrine Society. Among those present, besides the chairman, were—the Rev. Fathers W. Macdonald, O'Dwyer, and Grange, and Mr. J. T. Boylan, and other well-known citizens. Precisely at eight o'clock the Very Rev. H. J. Fynes, Vicar-General, took the chair, and immediately opened the proceedings. The Very Rev. Chairman delivered a lucid address, explanatory of the objects of the Christian Doctrine Society, and the general advantages to be derived by Catholic young men from its operations. He announced that a library, containing a vast amount of standard moral and religious literature, was in the possession of the Society, and open to the public at a merely nominal charge. Father Fynes adverted, in a few pregnant sentences, to the spread of indifference in the nineteenth century, and the urgent need of co-operation among Christian workers to stem the tide of infidelity and godlessness. He referred amusingly to the free-thought lecturer recently in this city, satirising that gentleman's remark that it was reserved for the nineteenth century to witness the unfettered development of true thought, and the fearless expression of it. Talk of the Dark Ages! said the preacher, they were ages of spiritual wealth in comparison with this irreligious and morally degraded century. He exhorted his hearers to warmly second the efforts of the young men of the Christian Doctrine Society to supply reliable religious intelligence from all parts of the world for the benefit of the Catholic community, and stated that the leading Catholic newspapers and magazines of the United Kingdom and America could be always found in the Reading Room. Illustrated and comic papers would also be found there to relieve the mind. The very rev. gentleman concluded with a few eloquent remarks on the advantages of pious reading and the cultivation of Christian morals.—Mr. J. T. Boylan spoke of the immense importance to Catholics of being well represented by the Press. He asserted, however, that the opinions of Catholic papers should be as open to criticism as those of the secular Press. He concluded by moving, "That this meeting pledges itself to warmly foster and support the library and reading-room of the Christian Doctrine Society." This was agreed to. Father Walter Macdonald, in a few apposite remarks, proposed a vote of thanks to the Very Rev. Chairman, which was carried by acclamation. The reading-room was tastefully decorated by flags, and the tables set off to advantage with flowers, &c. General commendation was given to the members of the society for the activity they had displayed in advancing the interests of the society.—*Auckland Paper*.

THE population of Honan, China, is 23,000,000, of which 5,000 are Catholics, attended by nine missionaries and three native priests.

THE *Montreal True Witness* says it is quite true that Mr. Chiniquy wished to see a Catholic clergyman when sick, notwithstanding the denial.