

MISSION ON THE WEST COAST.

FATHER HENNEBERY'S mission, which commenced in Hokitika on Sunday, 3rd, and ended on the 12th March, was a rouser in more senses than one. All the Catholic population of the town and vicinity, and some from distances of ten and thirty miles attended the exercises, which were three daily, at the hours of 6 and 9 a.m. and 7.30 p.m. The crowds were great and daily on the increase till the end. Father Ecuyer, of Greymouth, and Father McCaughey, of the Kumara, assisted the pastor and the Missionary a great part of the time in the administration of the sacraments. The ordinary procession which Father Hennebery usually inaugurates at the termination of his missions, was omitted for want of time to make necessary preparations therefor. But it was made up for by the extraordinary way in which the congregation gave expression to their feelings of faith and joy at the closing exercises.

Father Hennebery arrived in Kumara, from Hokitika, on Saturday, the 16th inst., and commenced his great work of reformation on the morning of the natal day of Ireland's glorious apostle, by pledging the Catholic congregation to drink nothing intoxicating that day.

The mission, in which was followed the same order of exercises, as in our sister town of Hokitika, has been every way a grand success. Fathers Ecuyer, Rolland, and Martin, pastors of Greymouth, Ahaura, and Hokitika respectively, contributed their valuable services to assist our rev. and beloved pastor, Father McCaughey, in hearing confessions and in other sacred functions. The crowds were immense, and steadily increased to the solemn close which took place last evening, the 27th inst. The results of eleven days spiritual exercises amongst us show what a power of faith and grace there is ever yet extant in the Catholic Church. About six hundred and fifty persons received the sacraments, and were pledged, and many were enrolled in the confraternity of our Lady of Mount Carmel, and all the people, here as well as in Hokitika, expressed their intention, by rising up in a body, to join the association for the Propagation of the Faith. Last evening a most orderly procession, about half-a-mile long, paraded the principal streets under flying banners. The non-Catholics who lined the streets, through which the procession moved, seemed to share in the felicity of the Catholics, judging from the hilarious and gratified expression of their faces. On returning to the Church, the procession separated into two files, allowing Father Hennebery and the rev. gentlemen, who accompanied him to pass through, and all the people, young and old, gave them an ovation by rapturous and continued cheering till they entered the sacred precincts.

What gave special interest to the mission on this Coast was the malignant attempts made on the rev. Missionary by some of the newspapers of Westland. His preaching on the subject of mixed marriages was the ostensible excuse for such unjustifiable assaults. But knowing ones are aware that their cause lies deeper.

The *Evening Star* of Hokitika was the first to turn its batteries against the Missionary by alleging that he taught the people "that the marriages of Catholics and Protestants are no marriages"—"that he denounced, in unjustifiable terms, marriages duly solemnised in some cases according to the rites of his own Church when the husband or wife were Catholics"—"that he plainly told those who were legally joined in marriage by the Registrar that they were not married at all." And other unfounded statements.

The same day the above statements were made by that paper, Father Hennebery denied them publicly in the Church, and characterised them as unmitigated falsehoods; and he asked the congregation present if he had taught such doctrines. In reply all the people broke out in one universal "No!" and of course all thought that was the end of the foul slander. But imagine the effrontery of the editor of the *Star* in endeavouring to maintain the false position he had taken by repeating the very next day the same mendacious statements, contending that Father Hennebery had actually expressed the same offensive doctrines again. And not satisfied with that, but a virulent personal attack was made by that paper to injure the character of the Missionary. Once more Father Hennebery publicly denounced the statements of the *Star* as unfounded and false, and the congregation repeatedly gave them an emphatic and public denial.

In another Hokitika paper, called the *West Coast Times*, it was essayed through the medium of correspondents under the guise of fictitious names to prove the falsehoods of the *Star* to be truths, and to blacken the reputation of the Missionary. But Father Martin's letter had to be published also in its columns.

But the most malignant of all attempts undertaken to tarnish the reputation of the Missionary was the furious onslaught made upon him by the *Kumara Times*. Even before Father Hennebery's arrival in Kumara, the onset was commenced upon him in an editorial of the most malignant kind. That same veracious paper in several of its issues quoted some of the approbrious language of the Hokitika journals, and flung them with his own foul and bitter aspersions in the face of the rev. Missionary, for the evident purpose of destroying his influence amongst the Catholics of this place. But it missed its mark, and by its own doings for ever stamped the face of its editor with unenviable notoriety. The Catholics of Kumara have in the meantime given a new proof of the undying faith of the Irish people in the Catholic Church, and of their ever enduring attachment to their priests. No sooner were the members of the congregation aware of the attempts made to tarnish the name of one of the accredited ministers of their holy mother—the Church—than they held a meeting—even before they had seen the face of the Missionary—condemning the course the *Times* had thought fit to pursue as offensive to Catholic feelings, and expressing their resolution to withdraw their patronage from that paper while under its present management. In effect, the Catholics of this place and vicinity have generally repudiated the *Kumara Times*, and have ceased to take it.

In addition it must be stated that Father Hennebery never went out of his sphere to notice the criminations of the Press against him. Being averse as he has often stated to newspaper notoriety, he has never, he says, in all the past allowed himself to be drawn into journalistic squabbles. From his complete abstinence from writing even one time to the Press, under the trying circumstances of his presence on this coast, we are led to accept that statement without hesitation.

All he could, so far be brought to do is to denounce from the pulpit the untruthful assertions made against him. But now, however, the matter assumes more than local proportions. The enemies of the Missionary, not satisfied with maligning him in the home press, endeavour to vent their spleen against him still more by spreading their unwarranted expressions throughout the country through the medium of the telegraph wires. It is only now the rev. gentleman is beginning to realize the depth and extension of the conspiracy against him through the agency of telegrams of enquiry and letters and extracts and clippings from Canterbury and other journals, which show him conclusively who the spirit is that is the prime mover in all this work of iniquity. He had contented himself hitherto with simply defending himself in the churches. But the provocations continuing to increase and become more malevolent he is at last brought, very much against his tastes and habits to enter on the war path and to assume an attitude more in harmony with the circumstances. What his future course of action shall be regarding the enemies of the good he is engaged in doing is evidently foreshadowed by his first step of sending through the Press Agency the telegram published by it.

When the Press and the telegraph were doing their worst to pull down what the Missionary was endeavouring to build up, certain ministers of Westland wheeled in as their allies, and contributed their share to further the cause. They tried to prove what is impossible—the lies of their companions in arms to be truth; and one of them who signed himself "Christian" came out in Biddy Moriarty style and attacked not only Father Hennebery but Father Martin as well with unrivalled Billingsgate and Scripture without stint.

Another preacher named Mr. Russell has also joined the ranks of the enemy and has endeavoured to convince the public that Father Hennebery did denounce mixed marriages and legal marriages as no marriages, and adds that he would swear to it.

Finally, what could be the occasion—of the cause no Catholic doubts about—of so much feeling and bad blood as have been lately displayed on this coast—regarding Father Hennebery's Mission? The ostensible occasion was his teaching about mixed marriages. And what did he teach? Surely none of the falsehoods which his enemies—for a purpose—would obtrude on the public as his. What then? He did not touch any marriage that is a marriage before God. But what did he teach? He taught what is contained in the end of Father Martin's protest against the *Evening Star*. He taught that married people should treat the state of marriage holily, because established by God, because a great sacrament in Christ and in the Church, for which reason the married people should be good Christian men and women; that they should be good husbands and wives, and good fathers and mothers. If Catholics are married to non-Catholics he instructed them to lead good Catholic lives; to pray earnestly mornings and evenings; to receive the sacraments frequently; to instruct their children well and to bring them all up in the Catholic religion. He taught, moreover, those in mixed marriages, that the Church never allows her children under any other conditions to engage in such marriages than that they have full freedom of their religion, and that all their sons and daughters adhere to the Catholic faith and no other. He added that they should not allow themselves to be robbed of the liberty of serving God according to the dictates of their conscience.

It is quite possible that such teachings as the above occasionally stir up the bile of those non-Catholic men who persistently deprive their Catholic wives of their liberty of fulfilling their Catholic duties. Must, then whatever domestic strife or misery arise from their action be attributed to the missionary's doctrines? Certainly not. As to the separations in lawful marriage such as the newspapers and the telegraph were so ready to publish, we know not of one case to have occurred, though we have made several enquiries. This statement is like the many others lately made about our missionary's teachings. They appear to be truths but are not. So it is, to this finally all the hubbub comes, that it has no foundation except in the imagination of the enemies of the Church, who would have everything, even in marriage, moulded according to their erratic hallucinations.

Several consoling results have followed the opposition of the allied forces of the Press, the telegraph, and the preachers. First of all it has united the Catholics, young and old, if possible, more than ever in their attachment to the Church. They have, besides, resolved, that if non-Catholic writers persist in slandering and vilifying the Church and her priests they must do it at their own expense, and the Catholics have withdrawn their patronage from the newspapers that have endeavoured to run down the Missionary by the force of outrageous falsehoods. They see, also, how necessary it is to patronise the TABLET and those who had it not before are now giving their subscriptions. Finally, the opposition is fairly dead, and Father Hennebery proceeds on his way, the victor enjoying his well earned triumph.

Kumara, April 3.

LAICUS.

It is a fact not generally known that the cemetery of the Methodist Church in Hendersonville, N. C., contains a petrified human body. The wife of Mr. William Murray died in the Mississippi Valley some forty years ago and was buried there. The husband emigrated to Texas, but after several years returned to exhume the body of his wife, so as to bring it back to this State. Imagine how amazed he was to find it in the coffin just as he had seen it three years before. The same features—almost the very same expression! But what he saw was not flesh—it was solid stone! The whole body had petrified. In that condition he carried it to North Carolina and delivered it to the aged father, Mr. Byers, who could hardly doubt that his daughter had come back to him asleep! The news spread that the body had been "turned into a rock," and great was the desire of everybody to see it. Attempts were made, it is said, to steal it out of the cellar where the old gentleman had carefully concealed it, but they were unsuccessful. All through the war it was guarded by the father as the most sacred trust, but few persons being allowed to see it. About six years ago, however, it was quietly buried in the Methodist cemetery in Hendersonville.—Asheville (N. C.) letter to the *Raleigh (N. C.) Observer*.