

## CONSECRATION OF NEW MARBLE ALTAR, ST. MARY'S CATHEDRAL, WELLINGTON.

THE solemn consecration of a new marble altar commenced at 10 o'clock, a.m., on Sunday, 7th December, at St. Mary's Cathedral, Hill Street, Wellington, by the Right Rev. Dr. Redwood, Bishop of Wellington, who wore his rich, golden, episcopal vestments on the auspicious occasion. The splendid Cathedral, with its matchless interior, was crowded. The very imposing ceremony commenced with a procession of acolytes, followed by the clergy and Bishop, who proceeded up the middle aisle, and afterwards entered the sanctuary and began to chant the Litany of the Saints. After this the holy water, composed of water, salt, and wine, was specially blessed by the Bishop for the occasion. His Lordship then proceeded round the altar seven times, sprinkling it with holy water. The water was also used by his Lordship with cement for hermetically sealing up a little tomb or sepulchre cut into the top of the altar, and containing a glass vase with martyr's relics, and a written document of the particulars of the consecration. The object of this document is to prove, if it ever became necessary, that the consecration had taken place. The altar was afterwards perfumed with holy incense four times, and consecrated once with the holy oil of catechumens and three times with the holy chrism. The parts where the altar table joined the other portions of the structure were also consecrated with the holy oil. Then one grain of incense was placed in each of the cavities of the four ends of the five crosses cut on the altar, and on each of the crosses were placed two tapers crossed with ends turned up, each end over one of the grains of incense. The tapers were then lighted, and both tapers and incense consumed to ashes. Towards the completion of the ceremony, the blessing of the cloths and ornaments took place. After the consecration of the altar, which lasted upwards of two hours, Pontifical High Mass was celebrated, the Rev. Father McNamara, the parish priest of the Cathedral being master of the ceremonies, and the Rev. Father Acquir deacon, and the Rev. Father Kerrigan sub-deacon.

The choir was full and sang Farmer's Mass in B. They acquitted themselves most admirably in both vocal and instrumental music under the able leadership of Mr. Putman, who has been for years endeavouring to perfect the choir, and deserves the greatest credit for its present efficient state. Miss Cemino officiated at the harmonium in a very superior manner. The offertory sung for the occasion was the "Alma Virgo" soprano solo of Hummel's offertorium, which was rendered by Miss O'Neill with exquisite skill and taste, the finished clearness of the high notes being truly beautiful, filling the Cathedral and doing ample justice to the delightful composition. After mass, the Bishop granted a special Indulgence of one year, which was read in English and Latin, to all those that were present; also an Indulgence of forty days to those who would visit the Cathedral on every anniversary of the day. Exposition of the most blessed sacrament then took place, which lasted till vespers, a great number taking advantage of it to pay the church a visit. At four o'clock in the afternoon, eight new members were admitted into the society of the children of Mary, instituted by the Rev. Father McNamara, and instructed by the good Sisters of Mercy.

The following day being the glorious 8th Dec., the anniversary of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the ever blessed Virgin Mary, the altar dedicated to her in the Cathedral shone forth in all its brightness, in preparation for that day. The beautiful statue of the Virgin, gleaming in white and gold under a most graceful canopy, was brought out in brilliant relief by the light blue of the back-ground. The floral decorations which adorned both the high altar and that of the Blessed Virgin exhibited a garden of flowers faultless in arrangement, while the groups of rare and exotic plants which hung their heads over the golden sanctuary rails completed devotional Art decorations, made thus charmingly pleasing by the Misses Johnston, who were also the donors of the flowers and plants.

In a built enclosure, immediately below the tabernacle of the new altar, was placed a sealed glass jar containing a parchment document engrossed by Mr. J. O'Neill, C.E., of which the following is a copy, viz.:

A. M. D. G. ✠ J. M. J.,  
St. Mary's Cathedral, Wellington.

"The following are the names of the members of the congregation who have subscribed two pounds and upwards towards defraying the expenses of the Altar. Messrs. Edward O'Malley, J. M. Mulligan, Charles Johnston, Walter W. Johnston, Michael Cosgrove, Michael Maher, R. P. Collins, Jeremiah O'Brien, John Keefe, Salvatore Cemino, senr., Charles O'Neill, James Doyle, Mrs. S. Cemino, Miss Ellen O'Connor, Miss Louisa Grant, Miss Horogan, Mrs. Honora Dalz, and Miss Maria Gordon O'Neill.

"This Altar has been erected in the year of Our Lord eighteen hundred and seventy-nine; the second year of the Pontificate of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII., the fifth year of the Episcopate of his Lordship the Right Rev. Dr. Redwood, Bishop of Wellington, and the fortieth year of his age, under the direction of the Rev. Father Macnamara, S.M., parish priest of St. Mary's Cathedral, Wellington, Charles O'Neill, C.E., architect.

"Dated this seventeenth day of November, 1879.

"F. E. Jacquier, Fecit Caen, France."

The evening services were Vespers and Benediction, and a procession of the Blessed Sacrament, followed by the various societies attached to the Cathedral. The societies present were the Children of Mary, about sixty young ladies with white dresses and blue veils and silver wreaths of flowers on their heads; the Hibernian Benefit Society; the Young Men's Society, and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. All carried lighted candles, and each society was preceded by its banner bearer carrying an appropriate symbolic device. The way was strewn with flowers by children from the Convent of Mercy, the pious Sisters of which were present, and we may take this opportunity of bearing testimony to the immense amount of good accomplished by them in the district. The Christian Brothers were also present, who cannot be too much praised for their untiring zeal to

impart a substantial and at the same time a religious education to the rising generation in Wellington.

Dr. Redwood preached a most eloquent sermon from the text "Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech." The new altar is of white marble, made and designed by M. Jacquier, of Caen, France, who obtained a gold medal for work of art at the last Paris Exhibition. It is in accordance with the style of the cathedral of the Gothic order. In front is a magnificently gilt sunk panel of the "Last Supper" in *alto relievo*, the canopy of which is supported by red variegated marble pillars. The front of the table of the altar itself is supported by green marble pillars. On the door of the sanctuary the figure of our Blessed Redeemer is sculptured in *basso relievo* and gilt. The arch above the sanctuary door is supported by two red marble pillars. The bases and capitals of all the pillars are richly sculptured and gilt. The altar is approached by three steps and is about nine feet wide and about three feet high. On the altar rest three "altar steps" for supporting candlesticks, flowers, and ornaments, having their fronts sculptured with floral arrangements, conspicuous amongst which is the shamrock. On the top of the sanctuary a chaste designed canopy is erected with a groined vaulted roof, over which rises a light and beautiful open spire, with gilded crockets, finished with a gilt cross about twenty feet high from the floor. The altar is all of marble, to which the stained glass windows of the chancel form a most suitable back ground. It is the most complete and valuable in the colony, and will cost between £500 and £600. It was erected by Messrs. Murdoch and Rose, builders and contractors, Wellington, under the immediate supervision of Mr. Charles O'Neill, C.E. and architect. At the back of the altar there is a movable marble slab, which is hung on pulleys and can be easily slipped up and down in grooves. This slab covers from view, when not required, an iron fire-proof chest, that is opened by a secret spring. The consecration of the new marble altar will long remain as a most important event in the history of the Catholic Church of Wellington.

## OUR MELBOURNE LETTER.

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

MELBOURNE, 10th December 1879.

Dr. Moorhouse gave a lecture last Friday on the subject of slavery. A very large and respectable audience—principally Protestant—gathered in the Town Hall to hear him. I think he must have startled them a good deal, those of them at least who had been taught to identify the Church of Rome as the Scarlet Woman. He gave a rapid sketch of the world, especially the Roman world, its pomp, its sensualism, its cruelty, its contempt for the weak, its worship of force, when Christ came down on earth to establish his Church, and to give her his commission to wrestle with all wrong, and to redress all evil. The lecturer showed how contrary after cent ry Popes, Bishops, Monks, the whole Church militant, set themselves to lift up the captive to brotherhood with their fellow-men. They began this crusade by inculcating the duty of suffering for and serving one another; and showed how the humility and self-denial taught by Christ was violated by the arrogant and domineering spirit in which slavery took root. He described with fervid eloquence how the Church had braved Roman power at its loftiest height by excommunicating a gladiator on the ground that he was a murderer, and any one who had been present at these combats on the ground that he was accessory to murder. He showed how, after long years of struggle these gladiatorial combats, in which annually thousands of slaves had lost their lives, were abolished; their final coup being dealt by a monk who had leaped into the arena in the midst of the combatants to protest against the carnage, and the blood of this grand soul was the last shed during these "Roman holidays," for all hearts were conquered by this divine example of self-sacrifice. To prove his Christian brotherhood the Church made the slave worship side by side with the freeman in her temples, and even raised him to the priesthood to teach and to administer sacraments to his old masters. He pointed out the decrees of the Councils of the Church, from the 6th century down, for the protection and freeing of slaves, and dwelt lovingly on the efforts, so marvellous in their romantic incidents and in their success made for the ransom of captives by the faithful, especially by the Bishops many of whom not only devoted their whole property, but melted down the plate of their churches for this purpose; "and" added the lecturer, "by the time the Reformation occurred slavery was dead."

At the meeting of the House yesterday Mr. Berry announced that in consequence of the vote given on the third reading of the Constitutional reform Bill, he had waited upon his Excellency and advised a dissolution of Parliament. His Excellency had accepted the advice and had authorised him to make the statement to the Assembly. The financial business is to be finished at once, when an immediate appeal to the country will be made.

A two days cricket match between eleven of Tasmania and an eleven chosen from the East Melbourne Club terminated on Monday. The East Melbourne men kept possession of the wickets during the whole of the two days, so that the poor Tasmanians had no innings at all. The score of the East Melbourne men amounted to 742; Tommy Horan making of his own bat alone 250 not out.

Things must be in a bad state indeed in the Catholic parts of Prussia if special trains are to be organised to convey youths out of Prussia to be confirmed. The Prussian diocese of Treves has been without a bishop for some years, and so long as the existing strife lasts there can be none. Fortunately that diocese lies close to the Bavarian diocese of Spire, and a fortnight ago, when Mgr. Ehrler, the Bishop of Spire, visited Homburg a special train went from St. Wendel to that place with 800 youths of both sexes to be confirmed by the non-Prussian prelate. Similar things happen in other dioceses; thus, for instance, the youths of Limburg have to be taken across the frontier into Hesse to be confirmed by the coadjutor of Mayence. When, oh! when, is such an absurd and iniquitous state of things to come to an end?