

A meaning has, then, been attached to the word 'penance' which it will not bear. Nor is this all. It is said:—'Twenty Masses were heard.' The truth is that the girl got this 'neatly typed' card on the fifth of August, and she left the institution that same evening, so she had no opportunity of hearing a single Mass. This 'penance' alarm is branded with falsehood in substance and in detail.

The Girls' Orphanage, South Melbourne.

(2) The charge made against the Girls' Orphanage at South Melbourne is of a far more serious character still. Here we are assured, on the same authority, that the education of this girl was so completely neglected that now, at the age of 17 years, she has to be taught how to read and write her own name by a 'little girl of ten.' The whole of Lucy Penberthy's school years were spent under the care of the Sisters of Mercy at South Melbourne Orphanage. That institution has a school attached, and the orphans are placed on the same level as the children attending of the Catholic schools in the Archdiocese. The Inspector of Catholic schools, Mr. Cook, makes an annual visitation to this school, and on the occasion of his last visit, in April of this year, he reported most favorably both of the quantity and quality of the knowledge imparted. He singles out for special commendation the reading and writing of the orphans. I now make this offer:—That if the Government, who have an interest in the orphanage, wish to send any of the State school inspectors to examine this school, without a moment's notice to the Sisters, I have no doubt but he will find that, taking into consideration the class of children being educated, it is fully equal to any primary school in Victoria.

Lucy Penberthy attended this school till she was twelve years and eight months. The school rolls show that during the last nine months of her schooling years she was absent only twelve days; and the fact of her not making the same progress as the other children is explained by the Sister in charge:—'Through bad sight she was under Dr. Kenny's care and forbidden school work; but on the whole she received more years of regular education than the generality of children. She was an extraordinarily wayward child, and at times not considered accountable for her actions. The effort to gain her attention and keep her out of mischief required a greater strain than the care of a large class of children.'

That same character she has fully sustained since she left the orphanage. But, in the face of those huge difficulties, was there no progress made with her education? Is she so completely ignorant of secular knowledge as to require a 'little girl of ten' to teach her how to write her name or read ordinary print?

This, charge, like the others, is built on the foundation of falsehood. I hold in my hand a scrap of her writing, which she left after her in the convent at Bendigo. Her signature, Lucy Gabriel, to this writing would do credit to many ladies in society; and the composition itself, although not perfect, is wonderfully good, considering the mental condition of the writer. It reads:—'Make our dear Lord in the Blessed Sacrament your constant thought, recollect that He is your friend, tell Him all your sorrows, go often in the day, if only for a few minutes, to relieve your mind in trouble, and you will find that the hardest trials will seem to pass away in a moment.'

This, then, is the poor, hunted, uneducated orphan who, we are asked to believe, is being taught how to write her name by the 'little girl of ten.'

A More Definite and Glaring Falsehood.

(3) The third charge hurled against the Catholic charities is one of so grave a nature that the author of that calumny is likely to hear more about it. This girl is said to have been 'drafted for laundry work to Rosary-place, Albert Park, at the age of eleven.' Here two institutions are assailed—the one which acts in loco parentis sending away a child to hard work during school years, and the other enriching itself by child labor. If parents sent a child of eleven years to hard work they would be justly considered unworthy of the charge committed them by God; if the proprietor of a laundry accepted the labor of a child of eleven, what would be his position? Yet both those acts of cruelty would be contained in the charge I have quoted, if that charge were true.

Fortunately, however, this charge stands on the same foundation as the others, except that the falsehood here is of a more definite and glaring character.

But what are the real facts of the case, as opposed to the libellous slander and the fiction with which it is supported?

The birth certificate of Lucy Penberthy shows that she was born on August 28, 1889. On the recommendation of the late Father Moriarty (whose letter is still at the orphanage), of Koroit, she, with her sisters, was admitted to the orphanage on April 5, 1891. The books both at Rosary-place and at the orphanage show that she was transferred to the care of the Good Shepherd Sisters on January 8, 1903—that is, in her fourteenth year. This, then, is the girl who, we are assured, was 'drafted to laundry work' at 11. As a matter of fact, she never did laundry work in the ordinary sense of the term. In reply to inquiries I have made both at Rosary-place and at Bendigo, I am told that she was employed at 'any light duties of which she was capable—at one time for a couple of hours in the packing room, at another, in the flower garden; then, again, assisting in the house work.' And the Prioress of the Bendigo Orphanage writes: 'Some days of the week the girls here have not three hours' steady work. Lucy Penberthy never did a day's work; and as she was inclined to distract other girls, she was 'merely kept in the packing room to keep her out of mischief.'

A Cowardly Defence.

There is one, and only one, defence that can be set up by defeated bigotry in the face of those facts. It is the cowardly defence set up by Adam after his deliberate sin: 'The woman whom thou gavest me to be my companion gave me of the tree and I did eat.'

The fruit—the story in this case—was fair to the eyes and delightful to behold, and the bigot did devour it with a relish. But he may now, like a coward, say that the woman deceived him. If so, what are we to think of his injustice in not inquiring, or his credulity in believing such perversions of facts? Adam forgot his duty to God, to the human race, and to his own conscience. The man who publishes false testimony to the injury of others, and on insufficient evidence, and then blames his informant, imitates the sin of Adam. But if she were capable of deceiving him, or if she were so defective in intellect as to believe the stories he has published on her authority, we can well understand how such defects of mental fibre would result in the position in which she is now placed.

## Diocesan News

### ARCHDIOCESE OF WELLINGTON

(From our own correspondent.)

September 29.

On Saturday evening at the concluding meeting of the Victoria College Debating Society it was announced that the Union prize, awarded for the best debater during the session, had been won by Mr. H. O'Leary. Messrs. E. J. Fitzgibbon (who acted as chairman of the society during the year) and H. O'Leary will represent the College in the inter-university college debate to be held next Easter at Auckland.

A wedding of more than ordinary interest took place on Thursday last at St. Mary of the Angels' Church, Boulcott street, where Mr. Harold Oakes, well known in musical circles here, was married to Miss Mabel Wilson, of this city. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Father Venning, assisted by Rev. Father Kimbell. Miss L. Wilson, sister of the bride, was bridesmaid, and Mr. R. White acted as best man. As the bridal party were leaving the church, the 'Wedding March' was played by the Rev. Father Kimbell. Among the wedding presents received was a silver salver, the gift of the employees of Mr. George Godber, for whom Mr. Oakes is foreman.

Mr. L. Reichel, who recently returned from a trip to the Old Country, delivered an interesting lecture on his travels before the members of the Catholic Young Men's Club on Thursday evening. The lecture was illustrated by a large number of lantern views, Mr. Missen manipulating the lantern. Mr. Reichel, who succeeded admirably in sustaining the interest of his audience, referred to incidents he had experienced and scenes he had observed on a journey that was taken via Australia, Ceylon, Suez, and Brindisi to England; thence to Germany, back to Ireland, and home to New Zealand by way of Cape Town, Hobart, and Sydney. A hearty vote of thanks was accorded the lecturer at the conclusion of his address.