

from captivity. The ineffable benefit of the Holy Sacrifice will not be denied him. But these thoughts need not be pursued any further.

On the other hand, what a picture could be drawn of the Death-surroundings

of such Catholics as have been brought under review. Objects of piety are conspicuous by their absence from the sick man's room. There is nobody to offer a prayer for him. He is writhing in agonies of pain and weariness. He is stupefied by the miseries of his helpless condition. Does he pray? Or does he blaspheme, saying: 'What have I done that God should punish me thus?' He has long since lost the use of prayer. How unlikely that the faculty of prayer will now return, after years of disuse of the same and abuse of grace! Restlessness, impatience, obliviousness of religion settle down upon him. The death of the wicked is very evil, declares the inspired Psalmist. 'A hard heart shall fare evil at the last,' exclaims Ecclesiasticus, another inspired penman.

Does not Holy Writ abound in terrible examples of vengeance falling on the wicked? Core, Dathan, Abiron and their associates in rebellion against Moses, went down the gaping earth alive into hell, as we read in the sixteenth chapter of the Book of Numbers. Goliath, Absalom, Jezabel, Holofernes, Baltassar, Antiochus, Ananias and Saphira, Herod the impious—how dire the end of each! Sinners that glory in evil things, shall grow old in evil, said Ecclesiasticus, until bitter death overtakes them. And then the wicked hearts shall be laden with sorrows, according to the same infallible authority.

Has not Christ pronounced the sentence on the rebellious Christian: 'He that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican?' And has He not also given forth the divine oracle: 'He that despiseth you, despiseth Me?' How dire and crushing the final judgment against those who would not hearken to the voice of God and His Church: 'Depart from me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. xxv., 41.)'

It is superfluous to enlarge any more upon the consideration. The class of Catholics already noticed usually die without the Sacraments, those powerful safeguards for a happy death. The friends are utterly indifferent respecting the spiritual interests of the dying man. At its best their conversation with him only turns on matters altogether worldly. Then comes the all-important question of the burial service. Enough has been put forward to show how the Church desires to honor the dead, and to assuage the pains of the holy souls in a temporary middle state. But there is no folly or wickedness greater than to allow a friend to die without the saving sacraments and then make a howling cry over funeral honors. The burial service is not a Sacrament. All the funeral services yet performed, or to be celebrated to the end of time, could not in their added up value save one single soul. Of no worth whatever are they to the reprobate. The worthy reception of the Sacraments would have enabled the poor sinner to depart from life under the happiest auspices. But this aspect of the case is no concern to the unfortunate surroundings of many a dying Catholic. Instances are sufficiently numerous and up-to-date to warrant this strong statement. However, the priest gives the benefit of

A Charitable Doubt,

although he cannot rid his mind of reasonable misgivings respecting the health of the departed soul. For the Psalmist declares that God's 'tender mercies are over all His works.' And the great apostle of the Gentiles lays down the doctrine that 'it is the will of God that all men be saved.' Yes; but Almighty God also requires the co-operation of every adult in the supreme business of salvation. For this very purpose He endows every soul with free will—a noble gift. And He that wills man's salvation, and affords the means to this end, has laid down the condition: 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.' Moreover, germane also to the question is that other divine oracle enunciated by St. Matthew: 'He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved.' But the sinner had spurned the 'sweet yoke' and the 'light burden' of his crucified and merciful Saviour. He had made, a perverse use of free will. He had resisted inspirations, entreaties, graces beyond number. The Good Shepherd had sought him most sedulously, but the 'wayward' and self-willed erring soul fled forever from his loving embrace. He has squandered the full measure of graces destined for his salvation. The end of the chain has been reached; and then it is to be greatly feared that the hardened heart is given over to final impenitence. 'Now we know that God doth not hear sinners,' exclaims St. John.

Is there no death-bed repentance? Yes, Longinus was saved on the bed of the cross. But does not St. Augustine make a striking comment on this remarkable conversion? 'One was thus saved, that nobody should despair; but only one, that nobody should presume.' Anyhow, God is absolute owner of His gifts, and He bestows them where He listeth. Nor must a man presume to limit His mercies. So the priest performs the funeral obsequies. He hopes for the better, though very telling arguments militate against him. Let him be ever so optimistic, he finds it hard to speak in the language of hope respecting the deceased. How unreal appear the words of that touching prayer: 'May Christ receive thee, Who has called thee! Is it to Paradise Christ, its Redeemer and Judge has called that soul? How void of life and truth appear, also, the words of the sweet invocation: 'May the angels conduct thee to the bosom of Abraham.' What avails to a lost soul the usual prayer for the dead? 'Eternal rest give him, O Lord. And may perpetual light shine upon him.' All is over. The friends of deceased are satisfied. They offer no prayer; but, after the manner of heathens, they load the coffin with flowers, and go away with the usual stereotyped judgment: 'Happy release—better off. May God preserve my readers from such friends!'

Diocesan News

DIOCESE OF CHRISTCHURCH

(From our own correspondent.)

November 12.

The Right Rev. Dr. Lenihan, Bishop of Auckland, is expected in Christchurch next week.
The Rev. Father Melu, S.M., now at Kaikoura, is on a periodical visitation to the Maori settlements in the South Island.

The Rev. Father McDermott, C.S.S.R., opened a mission at Leeston on Sunday. During the week he is to be replaced by the Very Rev. Father Clune, C.S.S.R., and will then commence the annual retreat at Mount Magdala.

The Rev. Father Gilleran of Hobart and the Rev. Father O'Flynn, also of Tasmania, were callers at the episcopal residence during the week. The Rev. Father Gilleran was at Mount Magdala on Sunday, and the Rev. Father O'Flynn celebrated the half-past-nine o'clock Mass in the Cathedral.

Although it may not be particularly proper to note the private life of notable persons, yet one naturally feels impelled to depart from the strict rules in this regard on occasions. The edification afforded by the example shown must be the excuse advanced. These remarks refer to Miss Tittell Brune, Mr. Kingston, and Miss Ferguson, members of Mr. J. C. Williamson's Company, who may be seen attending holy Mass daily in the Cathedral.

Pupils of the Sisters of the Missions (Sacred Heart Convent) figure prominently in the musical arrangements of the Exhibition. Miss Lottie Barker is leading harpist, Miss Rima Young was second harpist, and Miss Mary O'Connor sang in the chorus in the production of the Commemorative Ode at the opening ceremony. Miss Katie Young (Cathedral organist and an ex-pupil) is pianist—an official appointment for the season.

The attractions of Canterbury's Carnival Week and of the Exhibition brought together an enormous concourse from all parts. It has been a period of records in attendance at all the fixtures—race meetings, trotting meetings, and A. and P. Show, the latter also establishing records in entries and show days. On people's day (Friday last) it is estimated that fully 30,000 persons were on the ground, whilst at the Exhibition over 45,000 passed the turnstiles, bringing the total number of visitors there for the nine days up to 185,000.

On last Sunday week a number of the children at the Sacred Heart Church, Addington, who had been prepared in retreat by the Rev. Father Peoples, made their First Communion. After Mass the children were entertained by the ladies of the congregation at breakfast. There was Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament during the day and Benediction in the evening, the altar and sanctuary being beautifully adorned for the occasion by the Altar Society, assisted by the Sisters in charge of the schools. In the afternoon there was renewal of baptismal vows in the presence of a crowded congregation. On the following day the whole of the school children thoroughly enjoyed a picnic arranged in the extensive church and school grounds.

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