

OPENING OF NEW DOMINICAN CONVENT, OAMARU.

(From our special reporter)

IN spite of the very unfavorable weather on Saturday and the threatening appearance on Sunday morning a large congregation was present at the ceremonies in connection with the dedication of the new Dominican Convent of the Holy Rosary at Oamaru. Pontifical High Mass was celebrated by his Lordship Bishop Verdon, with the Right Rev. Monsignor Mackay as assistant priest, and Rev. Fathers Marnane (Christchurch) and Tubman (Timaru) as deacon and subdeacon respectively. His Grace the Archbishop of Wellington and his Lordship the Bishop of Christchurch were also present. The choir was strengthened by visitors from Timaru, Waimate, and Dunedin, and by an efficient orchestra composed mainly of local musicians. The Mass selected for the occasion was Farmer's in B flat. The soloists were Mrs Lynch (Timaru), soprano; Mrs W. S. King, alto; Mr McDonald (Timaru), bass; and Messrs Eiby (Timaru) and Goldstone (Waimate), tenors. Mrs O'Meehan (Timaru) and Miss McGuinness (Timaru) gave valuable assistance to the sopranos. The latter young lady gave a splendid rendering of Gounod's 'Ave Maria,' with violin obligato by Hon. G. Jones. The orchestra consisted of the following instrumentalists:—Hon. G. Jones, 1st violin; Mr Fred Jones, 2nd violin; Mr W. Miles (Dunedin), clarinet; Mr N. Meldrum, trombone; Mr C. Jones, cello; Mr H. Pheloung, bass; Mr E. Schnack, 1st cornet; Mr G. Pheloung, 2nd cornet. Miss K. Hannon, as organist, carried out her duties most efficiently. The assiduous labors of the director, Mr W. S. King, were manifested by the high status of excellence shown by the choir at both the morning and evening services. His Grace Archbishop Redwood preached the dedication sermon. Needless to say that his hearers, amongst whom were many non-Catholics, were spellbound, for never within the walls of St. Patrick's Basilica was heard so masterly a sermon. The following is a summary of his Grace's discourse:—

THE SERMON.

Archbishop Redwood preached from the following text: 'Everyone that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My Name's sake shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting'—(Matt. XIX, 29). After a brief reference to the solemnity of the day, which (said his Grace) deserved the highest appreciation, deepest sympathy, and most liberal support of his hearers, the preacher proceeded to sketch for them the life which is led by the Sisters who are to make the fine new convent their home.

A Nun

(said his Grace) is a Christian woman who has bound herself to God in order to tend to perfection by the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and by the observance of a common rule. There is a true and essential perfection in this world which is strictly required of all men as a means of eternal salvation. It consists in the union of the soul with God by charity which proves itself by keeping the commandments of God. But, as the degrees of charity are variable, so also are the grades of perfection. It suffices, for our present purpose, to distinguish two such grades which divide good people into two distinct classes. When the Son of God came into the world to be our model, He opened before us two ways to Heaven, the one, within the reach of everybody, which consists in keeping the commandments, and without which there is no salvation for those who have attained the use of reason. 'If thou wilt enter into life,' He says, 'keep the commandments.' (Matt. 19, 17); the other, more narrow and steep, adds to the keeping of the commandments the practice of the Counsels, and it is proposed only to nobler minds and more generous hearts, eager to attain a higher perfection in the Church of God, and a brighter crown in Heaven. 'If thou wilt be perfect,' He says, 'go sell what thou hast and give to the poor and then thou shalt have treasure in Heaven' (Matt. 19, 21). He had just been pointing out to His disciples the excellence of charity, and, by exhibiting to them its great reward, had exhorted them to embrace perfect continence; He had declared it to be a way so sublime that, without a special gift, men could neither understand its merit, nor embrace its constant lifelong practice. 'All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given' (Matt. 19, 11). And again: 'He that can take, let him take it' (ib, 12). Then to the good young man who had asked Him what he should do to have life everlasting, and whom He had told to keep the commandments, He finally said: 'Come, follow Me' (ib, 21); that is, walk in that way of obedience which I require in my more perfect disciples; imitate Me Who became obedient unto death; die to your own will, that you may lead a higher life with Me.

His Grace here quoted from the works of St. Eusebius, St. Cyprian, and St. Jerome to show that there had been two distinct ways of living instituted in the Church of God: the one voluntarily renounces marriage, posterity, fortune, and out of an immense love of heavenly things dedicates itself entirely to God; the other is less elevated and more accessible to human weakness, it engages in lawful wedlock, is busy with public or private affairs, together with the practice of religion.

The Religious State.

Many persons—and their number is far larger than is generally believed—who have well-grounded fears that, owing to their weakness, they would lose their souls in the world, are strictly bound to embrace the religious state. And oh! how excellent and how happy is that state! First of all it partakes of the excellence of the apostolate; for, the vocation of the apostles was the model of the religious vocation; and it is even of faith that Christ promised

to the religious life what He promised to His apostles, since He concluded in general and without exception that 'everyone that hath left house or brethren, or wife or children, or lands for My Name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold and shall possess life everlasting' (Matt. 19-29). Everyone who renounces the world like the apostles shall receive with them a hundredfold. This hundredfold consists in the incomparable spiritual happiness which the true religious enjoys. The nun is bound by vow to perpetual poverty, chastity, and obedience under a common rule approved by the Church of God. These three vows, together with charity, constitute the happiness of the nun—a happiness so great that our Saviour calls it a hundredfold. Jesus Christ had spent almost thirty years of his life as a poor carpenter in the solitude of Nazareth. The time had come for His manifestation to the world, and the revelation of His great truths. He climbs a mountain near the city of David and opens His mouth to speak, and what are His first words? 'Blessed are the poor.' What an astounding assertion; so contrary to the universal opinion of men! Yet it was true, being the utterance of Divine wisdom. And if it was true of any poverty of spirit, any genuine Christian poverty, how much more of the perfection of poverty—religious poverty!

What is Religious Poverty?

It is, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, the voluntary abdication of temporal goods both in heart and in effect. By the vow of poverty the nun positively and absolutely deprives herself of all right to the use of her property; she can neither retain, nor give, nor lend, nor buy, nor sell, of her own independent will. Now this spoliation constitutes real happiness. How? Because it saves the religious from the bitter pains, the dark chagrin, the racking anxiety attendant on wealth; it saves from the 'thorns of riches,' as our Saviour rightly calls them—cruel thorns, universal thorns—thorns of toil in their acquisition, thorns of fear in their preservation, thorns of grief and despair in their loss. Detachment from worldly goods, or poverty of heart, is necessary for salvation—for we cannot serve two masters, God and mammon; but it is extremely hard to be detached from them while we actually possess and enjoy them; therefore the safest and happiest way is to renounce their possession and use, by embracing voluntary and actual poverty. The best ship afloat cannot move onward, when fastened to the ground with many cables: break the cables, and away she sails in glorious career.

Moreover, by poverty the religious resemble the apostles—for the virtue of poverty is essentially apostolic. To become apostles the disciples of Christ had to leave all things. And the missionary of our day also—what wealth has he but the poor cross which he plants on a foreign strand? But look especially at the mendicant orders—the poorest of the poor—how great the glory of their apostolic conquests! Again, by poverty the nun resembles the angels. Where are their vast domains, their stately palaces, their coffers of silver and gold, their sparkling jewels, their wardrobes of silk and purple, their treasures in gems and diamonds? They are poor in earthly wealth—but they are rich in knowledge, rich in grace, rich in love, rich of the wealth of God. So, to a great extent, is the truly poor religious. The next spring of happiness for the nuns

The Vow of Chastity.

Where shall I find words for so great a theme? O the beauty of that celestial gem! Open the Scriptures and the Fathers and read their transports and admiration for this virtue. 'How beautiful is the chaste generation! Its memory is immortal before God and man.' And again: 'He that loveth cleanliness of heart shall have the King—that is, God—for his friend.' But above all, ponder the words of Our Divine Lord: 'Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God.' What is promised to them? The light of angels, the light of God. 'What can be more beautiful than chastity'—exclaims St. Bernard—'which transforms man into an angel! But with a difference all in favor of man: in the angel, chastity is the happy endowment of his nature; in man, it is the conquest of virtue.' The angels burn with divine love, so does the nun if she is faithful to her vow. Look at St. Teresa: was she not an angel, a seraph in human frame? Besides, the angels ever see the face of the Father who is in heaven; so the nun's pure heart will see God in the light of faith, in the contemplation of His mysteries. Her prayer will become more ardent, continual, incessant, like that of the cherubim who encircle the Almighty's throne.

The Third Element of the Nun's Happiness is Obedience.

All men, without exception, ought to be the children of obedience, since all have masters and duties. But in an age when our ears are dinned with the words 'rights of man, liberties of man,' there are but few who do not aspire to command rather than to obey. True obedience is hard to find outside the cloister, and hence there alone are found true peace and happiness, the precious fruits of order and discipline. Obedience delivers the religious from all perplexity, and she is sure to do good, as long as she keeps the command given in the name of God. Like Jesus Christ she always does the will of her Heavenly Father. There is still another wonderfully consoling thought in obedience—I mean, the peculiar merit which the vow of obedience superadds to the life of the religious. And the same holds good in regard to the other two vows. The fourth and last main element in the nun's happiness is charity. 'Quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum.' The happiness of mind is the knowledge of truth, the happiness of the will is power, and the happiness of the heart is love. Love and union produce happiness, as hatred and division beget misery. A charitable community is a picture of heaven. What is the bliss of heaven? Essential bliss is the vision and love of God; accidental bliss, the vision and love of creatures in God. In like manner all good nuns in a community are united in peace and joy, because they all behold the same God, by the eye of faith, in the person of their superiors; they love and obey her